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PLAYMETER Magazine

DECEMBER

VOLUME 24, No. 13 • 1998

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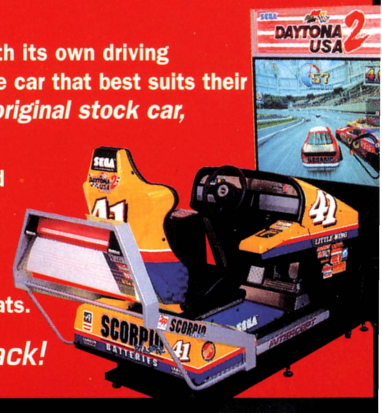
So Head to the Track, the Heat is Back!



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News BULLETIN

A FOND FAREWELL TO NICK MALONE

Sol Lipkin, sales director for Venture, called with the sad news that Nick Malone, former general manager of the original American Shuffleboard Co. passed away Nov. 1. Malone began his industry career in 1938 at American Shuffleboard right out of high school starting at the proverbial bottom, sweeping floors, etc. He was close to the owner of American Shuffleboard and when he died in 1951, Malone became the general manager. The sales manager was none other than Lipkin who joined American Shuffleboard that year and remained a close friend up until Malone's death.

Malone retired from the company nine years ago. He and his wife Theresa settled down in Bricktownship on one of the most beautiful bays in New Jersey in Barnegate. Malone had been deteriorating for several years following three spinal operations, according to Lipkin, and finally died of heart failure at age 80.

Malone is survived by his wife, children Louis, John, Nancy, Theresa, and Diane, and five grandchildren.

THE BLOCK AT ORANGE WELCOMES DAVE & BUSTER'S AND GAMEWORKS

It's official. The Block at Orange, an LBE with much to tout, opened Nov. 19 along City Drive in Orange, Calif., where three freeways meet. The center is unique in that it also plays host to both the newest Dave & Buster's location and newest GameWorks facility.

The Block at Orange is the first of a new brand of entertainment/retail centers to be introduced by The Mills Corp. Over 70 percent of the space is dedicated to entertainment and 30 percent to retail. The Block is intended to bring to mind the world's great city blocks such as Times Square. Laurence C. Siegel, chairman and CEO of The Mills Corp., has spearheaded the company's plans for growth with this new project. Included in the plans are future Mills sites in the top 30 domestic markets and an international expansion program starting with a site in Toronto, Canada.

Jerry Engen, vice president and development director for The Mills Corp., commented on the openings of Dave & Buster's and GameWorks: "Today's consumers want choices, and that's what they'll find at The Block. We believe GameWorks and Dave & Buster's are both going to be extremely popular because both are great, fun concepts. You can never have too many places to play!

Other attractions at The Block at Orange include an AMC 30-plex theater, Virgin Mega Store, and lots more. Dave Corriveau, co-founder of Dave & Buster's said, "The local demographics of this area may be our best to date. With its close proximity to Disneyland and the many other major Orange County attractions, the store should experience the most active tourist trade we've ever seen." This particular Dave & Buster's

ABOVE: From the parking area, interesting and fun elements greet visitors to The Block at Orange.

LEFT: The Million Dollar Midway at Dave & Buster's has over 200 interactive amusements including virtual reality and carnival-style games.

covers 58,000 square feet and offers a full-size, upscale American restaurant; billiards; interactive electronic games; a full-swing golf simulator, and a mystery dinner theater.

GameWorks kicked off its official opening Nov. 17 with a VIP charity preview for the benefit of Athletes & Entertainers for Kids, which is committed to comprehensive education and community service programs for children and teens. It supports over 40 community-based charities in Orange County.

GameWorks features 21,000 square feet of action, entertainment, and memorable dining experience.

NEW DATES AND ALLIANCE FOR ASI

Two spring trade shows, the Amusement Showcase International (ASI) and the IGBE Casino Management Conference & Expo, will be held concurrently at the Las Vegas Convention Center March 10-12. This means a change of dates for ASI, which was originally scheduled March 11-13. ASI is sponsored by the American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA) and IGBE is sponsored by GEM Communications LLC.

According to Mike Rudowicz, president of AAMA: "In 1998, the dates for ASI and IGBE overlapped one day only. We received very favorable feedback from our exhibitors and attendees. Having the shows side by side will allow us to optimize this positive effect and allow us to cross-promote the shows."

GEM Communications president and CEO Dick Moeller added, "After acquiring IGBE earlier this year, we started negotiations with AAMA to co-locate the two events. The convergence of gaming and entertainment brings our industries closer together. We feel that a co-location will benefit both shows and their attendees.

For more information, contact ASI show management, William T. Glasgow Inc., which also manages EXIME, the India Amusement Expo, AMOA, and the BCA. Glasgow has a new address (see "Have You Heard?," page 47).

ICE AND LAI ENTER AGREEMENT

Innovative Concepts in Entertainment (ICE) of Clarence, N.Y., and Allied Industries Group (LAI) of Australia have entered into an agreement whereby ICE has the exclusive rights to manufacture and distribute LAI's Stop the Clock prize redemption game in North and South America. Negotiations are underway for distribution arrangements in Europe.

Stop the Clock has been tested in nine countries and achieved 10,366 plays in 84 hours at one of LAI's Timezone locations, according to LAI. Malcom Steinberg, CEO for the LAI Group, praised ICE's strong market position and distributor network. He commented, "I believe that ICE is the right company to maximize our sales for this product in the territory."

Ralph Coppola, president of ICE, said, "Stop the Clock is getting tremendous play in our initial site testing." He compared the play appeal to that of the extremely successful Cyclone game and added, "The market has been waiting for this game and it has arrived."

SOUTHGATE HOSTS OPEN HOUSES

Southgate Amusement and Vending will host open houses at both of its Texas offices: Dec. 9—San Antonio, (800)695-5517 or (210)225-3844; Dec. 10— Houston, (800)460-4041 or (713)691-7335.

GAMEWORKS OPENS IN METRO DETROIT

GameWorks Detroit, the sixth GameWorks in the United States and the first in the Midwest, opened in mid-November at Great Lakes Crossing in Auburn Hills, Mich., 30 minutes north of Detroit. GameWorks will quickly follow its recent openings in Orange, Calif., and Detroit with six new locations slated to be in operation by mid-1999: Chicago, Ill.; Miami, Fla.; Easton, Ohio; Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; Guam; and Brazil.

Michael Montgomery, president and CEO of GameWorks, said, "GameWorks Detroit represents how we have evolved the GameWorks venue to be both a fun daytime place to gather and a sophisticated, engaging, and socially-oriented nighttime club." He added, "We're committed to the growth of the GameWorks business and believe that our unique entertainment destinations translate well into any language, any community,and any part of the world. Our continued expansion to more than a dozen venues domestically and around the globe is an important step for us."

Among the highlights at GameWorks locations are the GameWorks Grill restaurant, the Arena Bar, the Loading Dock of competitive games, the Skybox Lounge, and the Prize Zone of redemption games.

KRE TO DISTRIBUTE KIDDIE'S RIDES

Exclusive marketing rights to distribute Kiddie's Mfg.'s line of kiddie rides in the United States has been acquired by Kiddie Ride Enterprises (KRE). The Kiddie's Mfg. line offers products that feature licenses from Harley-Davidson, Warner Brothers, Looney Tunes, and Marvel Comics. The partnership of the two companies allows KRE to complement its existing line of rides by providing a greater assortment of product to the national retail accounts KRE services. For more information, contact KRE, (516)586-6059; fax (516)586-6305.

IT'S A BOY!

Congratulations to Brad Brown of Worldwide Video Entertainment and his wife Lisa who welcomed a new baby into their family. Little Eric Scott was born in early October; he weighed seven pounds and measured 22 inches long. Big sister Amy Nicole is almost two years old.

ON A HOLIDAY NOTE

Oriental Trading Co. has an extensive line of holiday merchandise kits that includes musical water balls, smile face Santa characters, holiday keychains and clip-ons, plush snowmen, musical light-up antlers, and ceramic reindeer mugs. For more information, call Oriental, (800)228-8884 or (402)596-2660; fax (800)228-1002 or (402)331-3749. ▲

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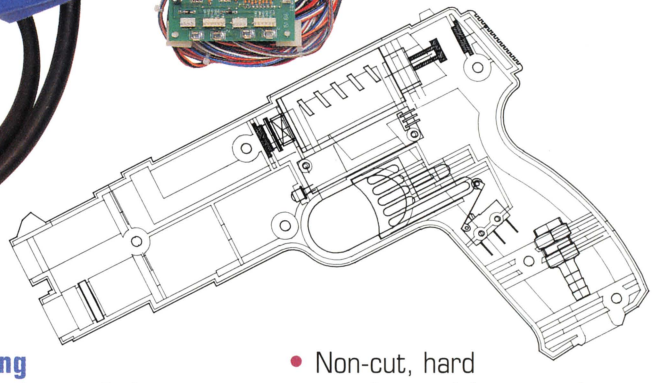

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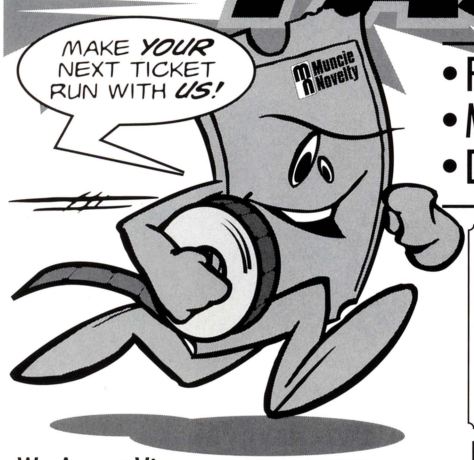

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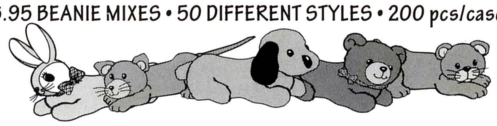

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Irving Blackman
Tom Fricke
Michael Getlan
Channing Hayden
Rich Holley
Brian Whitlock

Technical Writers
Vic Fortenbach
Randy Fromm

Director of Advertising
Ron Kogos

Classified Advertising
Carol Lea LeBell

Circulation/Office Manager
Renée C. Pierson

Editorial Offices
P.O. Box 24970
New Orleans, LA 70184

Street Address
6600 Fleur de Lis
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99 COINMAN: WILLIAM THEVAOS
The second-generation operator of Owl Music in North Carolina doesn't pull any punches when talking about contracts, service, game selection, and professionalism.

121 SEMINAR ROUNDUP
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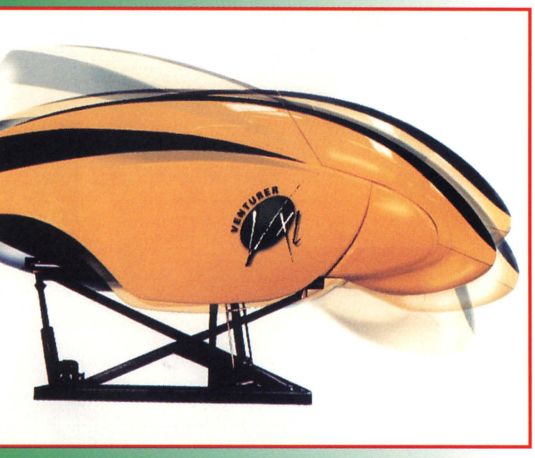
How can you keep your jukebox current without buying 14 new CDs? Offer hits the public recognizes, and get more frequent play with compilations. Save money in the bargain.

141 REDEMPTION AND THE LAW: SHOWDOWN IN TEXAS
Tom Fricke traces the history of the amusement purpose, limited-prize exception to the gambling crimes laws of Texas. Being on the right side of the law is not an easy call.



Thomson's *Venturer Vxl* is one of three new simulators that debuted at IAAPA. Page 22.

Technician's Corner

137 TECHNICAL TOPICS: SON OF ARCADEPC
Randy Fromm, exclusive in *Play Meter*, takes a close look at Quantum 3Ds Quicksilver ArcadePC system designed specifically for coin-op. Quicksilver uses a customized, low-profile steel chassis and specialized components for the rigors of the arcade environment.

Upgrades and enhancements are found in Merit's player-friendly *Megatouch XL 6000*. Page 58.

COVER

Surrounding the TouchTunes digital jukebox (center), clockwise from top right: Bill, Alan, and Mike Witsen of U-Neek Enterprises in front of one of their delivery trucks that proudly displays the Touch Tunes logo; Peter Porazzo of Atlas Music in Rhode Island with location owner Ginger; Joe Ferris of Ferris Music in Maine with his golden retriever, Toby TouchTunes; and the rollout at Aussie's Pub in Omaha, Neb., where Larry Witt, Rod Kruse, and Rick Murray of Nebraska Technical Services pose with some of the TouchTunes gang and Aussie's Pub owner Eric Perquin.

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- **IAAPA Wrap-Up**
- **Michael Getlan's Fall/Winter Game Review**

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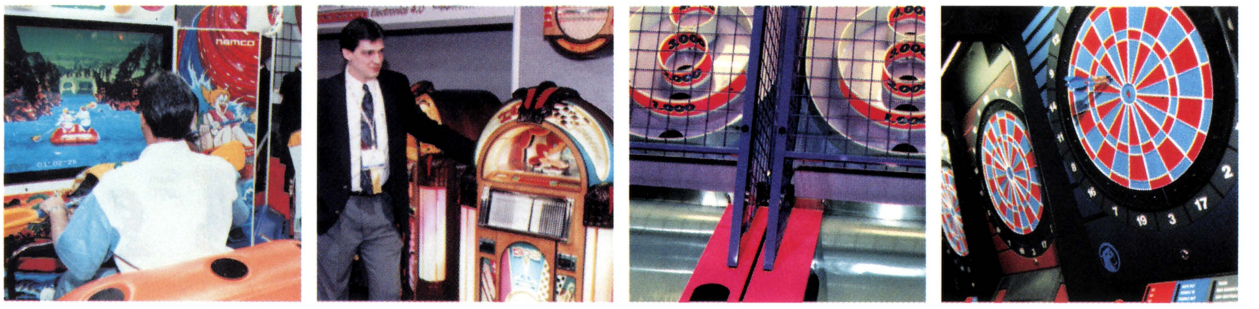
AMUSEMENT SHOWCASE INTERNATIONAL

But that's not all, folks! Hear top industry talent talk about issues to prepare your locations for the next century at ASI Seminars. Shop talk takes center stage at TechFest where you can sharpen your technical skills. Or go on tour with the FEC Field Trip and come home packed with practical ideas for your own locations. And back for a command performance will be the 2nd annual AAMCF Golf Outing and the Operator's Cocktail Party. The products, the people and the programs all add up to one blockbuster Show!

The hottest ticket in town this Spring will be your badge of admission to the ASI Show. So why not get into the act?



NEW DAYS - WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY
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FROM THE EDITOR

That's the rule, and I'm stickin' to it!

In a recent cover story in *Time* magazine, we were taken on a behind the scenes tour at Duke University Hospital. We got a glimpse not only of the patients they treat, but at the enormous burden of paperwork and phone calls required to deal with the new managed health care. How many of you have heard horror stories like the one about the woman with an infected leg? Her doctor said there was a new procedure for her condition but, unfortunately, the only treatment her insurance company would pay for was amputation.

Automobile insurance companies are now entering the mad world of "managed car care." Yes, it comes from personal experience. A vandal threw something through the back window of my car, shattering it to bits. I called my insurance agent, who informed me that I must contact Link Services, the new glass claims department for State Farm. Ray kindly put me on three-way with Vera at Link Services. She put me on hold and called SafeLite Glass. Vera then told me that SafeLite cannot install a window in a convertible because it has to be sewn into the top. My chore was to find someone who could do it, let her know, and she'd handle it from there.

I called SafeLite and asked who they would recommend. Calamari Trim was their suggestion so I talked to Joe, and he said he'd order the glass. I called Link Services, talked to Stacy this time, and she said I could not use Calamari Trim because they were not on the State Farm "approved" list. She suggested I call other places. I suggested she do it and let me know where to take the car.

Stacy called back simply bubbling with the good news: Auto Glass of New Orleans would be pleased as punch to make me their customer, and she put me on three-way with Vicki. After insurance information was exchanged between Vicki and Stacy, Vicki said she'd call me back to make arrangements. When she called she explained that Auto Glass of New Orleans did not actually do the work themselves. She gave a glowing description of the company they use with its smudgeless reputation, said they would do an impeccable job, and just knew I'd be pleased. Who was this heavenly company? Calamari Trim! I've made arrangements to be there Monday morning. At least I don't have to amputate my top.

Why have things gotten so out of hand with health care, car insurance, or pleasing customers? Our industry cannot afford to be a part of what I call "managed fun." Customers aren't always dishonest; they aren't always trying to get one over on you. They've had to deal with health care, car insurance companies, and they're at your place to have fun and that's it. They don't expect a hassle over a lost token or spilled drink.

Yet, some location owners don't see it that way. Michael Getlan has penned several articles stressing the importance of treating your employees like your business depends on it. Doesn't it? Maybe he's talking about treating your employees like you expect them to treat your customers. Do they feel secure in assessing a situation, handling it to the customer's satisfaction, even if it means bending a rule? Here's an example: I went to a Chinese restaurant and was enjoying my egg roll, but needed a bit more sauce. I went to the counter, asked for it, and was told it would be 25 cents. But I'm eating here and I only need a little. "That's the rule. The boss said no one gets extra sauce free," I was told. Did I have the 25 cents? Of course! Will I go back there? Not on your life. But I'll certainly enjoy my next visit to another restaurant which trained its employees much differently. Here's the story: A youngster dropped his drink. As the mother began to get a little upset, an employee whisked away the cup, mopped up the drink with a towel, and was back in an instant with a fresh new drink and a big smile that spread to the mother and the little one. I even smiled at the thoughtfulness of that waitress.

Both of these incidents were minor in the scheme of things. One lost my business, the other made me vow to return as often as possible. Have your customers left with similar feelings, good or bad? Were you irritated that too many customers were claiming they lost a token in a machine so you decided no one would get a refund? Look at it like this: you could probably give every one of your customers a token (or two) and still not lose as much as you would when one family decides they won't be back. Maybe you don't know if this has happened in your place. Now that's a really horrible thought. ▲

Valerie Cognevich
Editor

We want to hear from you about any of the articles in this issue or topics you'd like to see.
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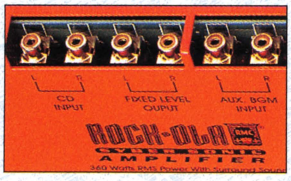

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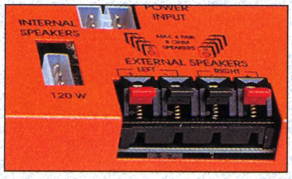

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3.	Golden Tee '98 *(Incred. Tech.)*	7.68	289	48.78
4.	Soul Calibur *(Namco)*	7.63	102	9.76
5.	Dynamite Cop *(Sega)*	7.60	92	6.10
6.	Fisherman's Bait *(Konami)*	7.59	175	26.83
7.	Area 51 *(Atari)*	7.22	1637	56.10
8.	Marvel vs. Capcom *(Capcom)*	7.18	263	34.15
9.	Tekken 3 *(Namco)*	7.13	870	56.10
10.	Golden Tee '97 *(Incred. Tech.)*	6.89	685	42.68
11.	Police Trainer *(P&P)*	6.84	554	45.12
12.	King of Fighters '98 *(SNK)--tie*	6.80	63	12.20
12.	Metal Slug 2 *(SNK)--tie*	6.80	76	24.39
13.	Golden Tee 3D Golf *(Incred. Tech)--tie*	6.64	1384	34.15
13.	Street Fighter Alpha 3 *(Capcom)--tie*	6.64	1	17.07
14	Point Blank *(Namco)*	6.59	884	20.73
15.	Raiden Fighters 2 *(Fabtek)*	6.50	26	17.07
16.	Strikers 1945 Part 2 *(Worldwide)*	6.44	98	19.51
17.	D&D Shadow/Mystara *(Capcom)--tie*	6.20	202	6.10
17.	Tournament Solitaire *(Dynamo)--tie*	6.20	688	6.10
18.	World Class Bowling *(Incred. Tech.)*	6.14	344	25.61
19.	Lethal Enforcers *(Konami)*	6.13	1618	57.32
20.	Zero Point *(GameVision)--tie*	6.09	23	13.41
20.	Tekken 2 *(Namco)--tie*	6.09	1037	41.46
21.	Die Hard Arcade *(Sega)*	6.04	430	32.93
22.	Bust-A-Move *(SNK)--tie*	6.00	483	35.37
22.	Samurai 64 *(SNK)--tie*	6.00	✷	4.88
22.	Street Fighter EX *(Capcom)--tie*	6.00	21	12.20
22.	Street Fighter EX II *(Capcom)--tie*	6.00	0	8.54
23.	Beastorizer *(Namco)--tie*	5.89	0	10.98
23.	Marvel Heroes vs SF *(Capcom)--tie*	5.89	189	32.93
24.	Strikers 1945 *(Worldwide)*	5.88	152	20.73
25.	X-Men vs. Street Fighter *(Capcom)*	5.81	333	32.93
26.	S.F. III 2nd Impact *(Capcom)*	5.75	✷	9.76
27.	Raiden II *(Fabtek)*	5.73	785	26.83
28.	Aero Fighters 3 *(SNK)*	5.70	76	12.20
29.	Raiden DX *(Fabtek)*	5.69	346	15.85
30.	19XX *(Capcom)--tie*	5.67	119	7.32
30.	Bust-A-Move Again *(Taito)--tie*	5.67	603	7.32
30.	Sharpshooter *(P&P)--tie*	5.67	24	7.32

VIDEO DEDICATED

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	NFL Blitz '99 *(Midway)*	8.79	114	41.46
2.	Time Crisis II *(Namco)*	8.71	357	29.27
3.	Gauntlet Legends *(Atari)*	8.67	57	7.32
4.	Bass Fishing *(Sega)*	8.40	55	6.10
5.	Site 4 *(Atari)*	8.21	52	17.07
6.	House of the Dead *(Sega)*	8.00	946	32.93
7.	Teraburst *(Konami)*	7.60	159	6.10
8.	Gun Blade NY *(Sega)*	7.22	1030	10.98
9.	Tourn. 3D Golf *(Incred. Tech)*	7.11	935	21.95
10.	Maximum Force *(Atari)*	7.08	733	47.56
11.	Time Crisis *(Namco)*	6.71	1060	20.73
12.	Beast Busters: 2nd Nightmare *(SNK)*	6.50	10	4.88
13.	Virtua Cop 2 *(Sega)*	6.36	900	17.07
14.	Solitaire Challenge *(Dynamo)*	6.14	1500	8.54
15.	Radikal Bikers *(Atari)*	6.13	9	19.51

VIDEO SIMULATORS

1.	The Lost World: J. Park *(Sega)*	8.64	704	30.49
2.	Cruis'n World *(Midway)*	8.29	1290	67.07
3.	Daytona USA Limited *(Sega)*	8.25	526	4.88
4.	Harley-Davidson/LA Riders *(Sega)*	7.89	383	23.17
5.	Daytona USA 2 *(Sega)*	7.88	70	20.73
6.	San Francisco Rush: Rock *(Atari)*	7.80	643	24.39
7.	Daytona USA *(Sega)*	7.53	2629	36.59
8.	Top Skater *(Sega)*	7.41	913	20.73
9.	Downhill Bikers *(Namco)*	7.33	83	3.66
10.	Kick-It *(Inter. Light)*	7.20	234	6.10
11.	California Speed *(Atari)*	7.15	349	41.46
12.	San Francisco Rush *(Atari)--tie*	7.12	1052	30.49
12.	Cruis'n USA *(Midway)--tie*	7.12	2483	52.44
13.	Off Road Challenge *(Midway)*	7.04	603	34.15
14.	Cyber Cycles *(Namco)*	6.88	1058	9.76
15.	Wave Runner *(Sega)*	6.78	783	10.98
16.	Alpine Racer 2 *(Namco)*	6.74	886	23.17
17.	Home Run Derby *(ICE)--tie*	6.67	455	7.32
17.	Rapid River *(Namco)--tie*	6.67	243	7.32
18.	Sega Super GT *(Sega)*	6.60	538	12.20
19.	Tokyo Wars *(Namco)*	6.56	446	10.98
20.	Alpine Surfer *(Namco)--tie*	6.33	545	10.98
20.	Motocross Go! *(Namco)--tie*	6.33	16	7.32
20.	Sega Rally 2 *(Sega)--tie*	6.33	✷	3.66
21.	Motor Raid *(Sega)*	6.25	51	4.88

What the numbers mean:

Point Value—An average of the ratings that operators give each game they circle (on a scale of 3-10) on their Equipment Poll ballots.

Longevity Points—Awarded after compiling a list of the top 60 videos and pinballs (combined) and compiling the top 60 redemption games (all categories combined). The #1 game gets 60 points, the #2 game gets 59 points, on down to the #60 game that gets 1 point. The higher the longevity points the better the "legs" of the game.

Percentage of Response—Amount of respondents who rated the games; another barometer of game success.

✷ New or reappearing games ✷✷Play Meter 1997 Reader Survey

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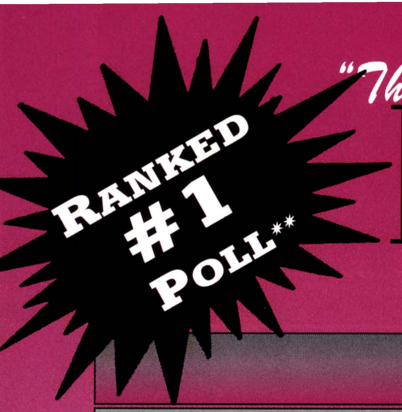

"The Operators' Choice"

PLAY METER

Equipment Poll

REDEMPTION

ALLEY BOWLERS

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Pro Striker *(Design Plus)*	8.20	438	6.10
2.	Basket Fever *(Bay Tek)*	7.50	741	4.88
3.	ICE Ball *(ICE)*	7.38	1081	9.76
4.	Skee-Ball Too! *(Skee-Ball)*	7.00	695	3.66
5.	Skee-Ball Classic *(Skee-Ball)*	6.59	886	26.83

SPORTS GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Around the World *(UETD)*	8.00	232	3.66
2.	Super Shot *(Skee-Ball)*	7.25	1026	9.76
3.	Hoop Fever *(ICE)*	7.00	28	3.66
4.	Shoot to Win *(Smart)*	6.68	755	23.17
5.	Hoop Shot *(ICE)*	6.50	441	4.88
6.	Street Fever *(ICE)*	6.33	5	3.66
7.	Full Court Frenzy *(ICE)*	6.00	539	12.20
8.	Full Court Fever *(ICE)*	5.88	875	9.76
9.	Rage in the Cage *(Skee-Ball)*	5.80	318	6.10
10.	Hoop It Up *(Atari)*	5.47	1089	18.29
11.	UB-QB Football *(Skee-Ball)*	5.43	127	17.07
12.	Slugfest *(Williams)*	5.35	7	24.39

SINGLE CRANES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Rainbow *(Rainbow)*	9.00	1540	6.10
2.	Jumbo Crane *(Grayhound)*	7.50	819	7.32
3.	Lax *(Noel Industries)*	7.29	207	8.54
4.	Classic Watch Crane *(Smart)*	6.80	1158	6.10
5.	Skill Crane *(Grayhound)*	6.78	498	10.98
6.	Big Choice *(Fun Merchants)*	6.75	866	14.63
7.	Clean Sweep *(Smart)*	6.59	1297	32.93
8.	Showcase *(Smart)*	6.00	178	3.66
9.	Candy Crane *(Smart)*	5.94	523	37.80

CHILD-SIZE GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Toss Em *(UETD)*	8.25	329	4.88
2.	Jr. All American *(UETD)*	8.00	106	3.66
3.	Smart Toss Em *(Smart)*	7.60	890	6.10
4.	Mini Dunxx *(ICE)*	7.40	515	6.10
5.	Bozo Grand Prize *(ICE)*	7.00	81	4.88
6.	Shoot To Win! Jr. *(Smart)*	6.33	923	10.98
7.	Feed Big Bertha *(Smart)*	5.88	309	19.51
8.	Hungry, Hungry Hippos *(ICE)*	5.44	26	10.98
9.	Barnyard Babies *(Skee-Ball)*	5.33	37	3.66
10.	Skee-Toss B.C. *(Skee-Ball)*	5.14	28	8.54

ROLL DOWNS

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Rock N Roll *(Bay Tek)*	7.00	134	3.66
2.	Spin To Win *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.60	1015	18.29
3.	Clown Roll Down *(Bay Tek)*	6.43	205	8.54
4.	Jungle Rama *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.25	438	4.88
5.	Tic-Tac-Toe *(Skee-Ball)*	5.60	46	6.10
6.	Jungle Picnic *(Bay Tek)*	5.00	1	4.88

NOVELTY

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Cyclone *(ICE)*	9.47	2115	41.46
2.	Cyclone Jr. *(ICE)*	9.14	1347	8.54
3.	Claim Jumper *(Benchmark)*	8.78	424	10.98
4.	Solar Spin *(Lazer-Tron)--tie*	8.00	935	6.10
4.	Turbo Ticket *(Exidy)--tie*	8.00	81	3.66
5.	Treasure Falls *(Planet Earth)*	7.88	1290	19.51
6.	Round 'n Round *(Astro)*	7.43	1165	8.54
7.	Pirate's Revenge *(5 Star)*	7.38	435	9.76
8.	Surfin' Safari *(5 Star)*	7.30	848	12.20
9.	Dinoscore *(Planet Earth)*	7.16	1731	23.17
10.	Colorama *(Bromley)*	7.00	1580	20.73
11.	Flip N Win *(Planet Earth)*	6.67	545	7.32
12.	Cosmo Gang *(Data East)*	6.63	16	9.76
13.	Steer Crazy *(Fun Industries)*	6.20	247	6.10
14.	Prize Zone *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.14	390	8.54
15.	Simple Simon *(Sammy USA)*	5.70	131	12.20
16.	Hop-A-Tic-Tac-Toe *(Data East)*	5.64	46	17.07
17.	Pop-A-Tac-Toe *(Coastal)*	5.50	101	7.32
18.	Killer T-Rex *(Smart)*	5.33	194	3.66
19.	Pop-A-Ball *(Coastal)*	5.23	84	15.85
20.	Sidewinder *(Bob)*	5.00	*	3.66

COIN DROP GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Goin' Rollin' *(Seidel)*	8.67	1178	3.66
2.	Smokin' Token *(Seidel)*	8.25	1743	24.39
3.	Big Haul *(Benchmark)*	7.91	1348	28.05
4.	Cut the Cheese *(Sega Pinball)*	7.67	830	7.32
5.	Twister *(Lazer-Tron)*	7.57	331	8.54
6.	Pirate's Gold *(Lazer-Tron)*	7.17	316	7.32
7.	Wheel 'M In *(Bromley)*	7.13	1533	19.51
8.	Super Bank It II *(Lazer-Tron)*	7.00	299	3.66
9.	Super Rock-N-Bowl *(Bromley)*	6.67	192	3.66
10.	Rock-N-Bowl *(Bromley)*	6.47	512	20.73
11.	Aftershock *(Lazer-Tron)--tie*	6.22	580	10.98
11.	Home Run Hitter *(CCI)--tie*	6.22	624	10.98
12.	The Mask *(Data East)*	6.20	820	6.10
13.	Roll For Gold *(Benchmark)*	6.00	441	7.32

GUN GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Water Game *(Bob's Space Racers)*	7.50	644	4.88
2.	Big Mouth *(Meltec)*	6.33	158	10.98
3.	Big Mouth 2000 *(Meltec)*	6.25	61	4.88
4.	Miner's Revenge *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.00	229	6.10
5.	Knock-Down *(Meltec)*	5.86	116	8.54

BOPPING/STOMPING GAMES

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Spider Stompin *(Island)*	7.67	1457	10.98
2.	Tortoise & The Hare *(Island)*	7.00	232	3.66
3.	Ribbit Racin *(Lazer-Tron)*	6.82	989	20.73
4.	Circus Hi-Rise *(Skee-Ball)*	6.40	352	6.10
5.	Wacky Gator *(Data East)*	6.05	508	25.61
6.	Swamp Stomp *(Lazer-Tron)*	5.67	633	7.32
7.	Whac-A-Mole *(Bob's Space)*	5.33	200	10.98

***Play Meter 1997 Reader Survey*

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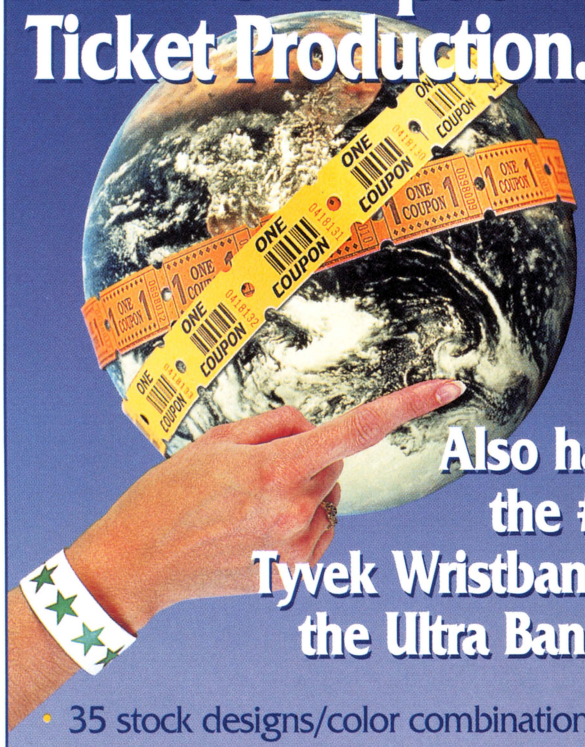

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PLAY METER

Equipment Poll

PRIZE VENDORS

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Sports Arena *(Sammy USA)*	8.04	410	31.71
2.	Fun-E-Ball *(Fun Industries)*	6.33	61	3.66
3.	Kick n Catch *(Fun Industries)*	4.50	1	4.88

PINBALLS

	GAME	POINT VALUE	LONG. POINTS	% OF RESP.
1.	Monster Bash *(Williams)*	8.83	112	14.63
2.	Medieval Madness *(Williams)*	8.17	757	29.27
3.	Godzilla *(Sega)*	8.00	49	3.66
4.	Viper Night Drivin' *(Sega)*	7.80	247	6.10
5.	Attack From Mars *(Bally)*	7.45	1338	26.83
6.	Scared Stiff *(Bally)*	7.00	783	29.27
7.	The Addams Family *(Bally)*	6.93	3617	51.22
8.	Theatre of Magic *(Bally)*	6.87	1449	37.80
9.	Lost In Space *(Sega)*	6.75	8	4.88
10.	Arabian Nights *(Williams)*	6.73	577	18.29
11.	Junk Yard *(Williams)*	6.62	334	15.85
12.	No Good Golfers *(Williams)*	6.61	145	21.95
13.	Cirqus Voltaire *(Bally)*	6.53	60	20.73
14.	Star Trek: TNG *(Williams)*	6.38	1745	35.37
15.	Star Wars Trilogy *(Sega)*	6.36	206	13.41

COUNTERTOPS

1.	Megatouch XL *(Merit)*	8.15	1064	50.00
2.	Touchmaster 4000 *(Midway)*	7.14	106	17.07
3.	Megatouch 5 *(Merit)*	7.13	611	37.80
4.	Touchmaster *(Midway)*	6.91	852	13.41
5.	Megatouch IV *(Merit)*	6.80	1285	42.68
6.	Global Touch HD *(Micro)*	6.71	22	8.54
7.	Megatouch Tournament *(Merit)*	6.33	868	10.98

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What is your most popular jukebox?

#1-Rowe, #2-NSM, #3-Rock-Ola, #4-Wurlitzer

In order to accommodate the influx of new games on the ballot we have discontinued the Classic Video category. All-time favorites such as *Ms Pac-Man* are universally recognized and will always have a dedicated following. We applaud the impact these classics have had on the industry; they have earned a place in the Coin-Op Hall of Fame.

Due to the popularity of the new Prize Vendors we have added a category for that equipment.

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It's been one hell of a year

Excuse my French, as the saying goes, but this has been a hectic year filled with controversies and consolidation on par with our nation's political drama. In reporting the results of the November state and national elections, Dan Rather of CBS News characterized the political rhetoric and mud-slinging as "enough to choke a buzzard." Not exactly eloquent, but we get the message.

In the coin-op arena we had to worry about, among other issues, the potential ban on cigarette vending machines and possible mandated settlement, the confiscation of presumed legal 8-liners in Texas, the Internet Gambling Prohibition Act that was worded in such a way that coin-op games would have been impacted, and the threat of proposed legislation in Florida (the Children's Protection from Violence Acts) that would have prevented guests under the age of 18 from playing or viewing video games that contain graphic violence of any kind.

The industry made a commitment to the U.S. Congress and pledged to follow the Parental Advisory System (PAS) that is, in effect, a game guide that alerts players and parents to the levels of violence, strong language, and sexual content in video games. Strict adherence to this system is required; it's not optional. We serve the public and must have a social conscience.

Distributors circled the wagons, and when they lined up for a recount, they were minus a few wagons. Changes in the distribution network coincided with the overall downturn in business and rumblings about distribution falling short on the marketing end. The comment, heard more than once, essentially said that more distributors need to work their customer base and stay in close touch with operators instead of waiting for the call that asks, "What do you have that's new?" Redemption game manufacturers in general have long felt they needed more support and openmindedness from distribution.

By year's end, the question of the day was, "Who's buying who this month?" Mergers, acquisitions, whatever you want to call them, the result is the same: the big are getting bigger, and the small are disappearing. We are accustomed to sales representatives moving about within the industry in pursuit of new opportunities, but entire companies no longer on the map is cause for concern. Back in October 1997, the focus of my editorial was, prophetically, "consolidation is the name of the game."

Looking back over the year, as we prepared our annual "Year in Review" special section, made it seem as if all these happenings took place overnight. Our industry has been in the shop for a front-end realignment, so to speak, and it's not over yet. Will some of the industry's trade shows come together for the greater good and better attendance figures to create a new entity with potentially wider appeal? That's a subject for another time. ▲

We want to hear from you about any of the articles in this issue or topics you'd like to see. Phone: 504/488-7003; FAX: 504/488-7083; e-mail: (news@playmeter.com).

Bonnie Theard
Managing Editor

LAZER-TRON HOT REDEMPTION HITS!

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Twister is the slowest BIG money game in the industry. Coins roll round and round until hitting one of the targets. Some coins stay in play over 20 seconds. Hit all 7 targets and you win the Progressive Bonus!

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MATCH EM UP™

Match Em Up is the hot new skill stop game that challenges players reflexes to stop the rotating lights on matching fruit symbols. Each time the player stops the light, one of the 3 spinning reels stops on the same symbol. Match three 7's to win the Progressive Bonus!
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Size: 25¼" W x 50" D x 73" H
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VRS™

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VRS is the first true redemption game **SYSTEM**. Operators can purchase a VRS cabinet and rotate in new games for years to come. New game kits will cost under $1000. The system includes hit games, Solar Spin®, Miners Revenge®, Slide Master™, Chip Away™ and more. New games will be introduced every few months!

Size: 25¼" W x 38" D x 74½" H
Wt. 250 lbs.

PRIZE ZONE™

Prize Zone is one of the most exciting games in the industry for both arcade and street operators. This multi-game system features 12 skill based video redemption games including great arcade style games, sports games, quiz games and solitaire games. A can't miss purchase for any location!

Size: 25¼" W x 38" D x 74½" H
Wt. 300 lbs.

ROLL - A - RAINBOW™

Roll A Rainbow is a hot new ball roll down game. Players try to roll balls into each of the target slots without going in the same slot twice. The more slots they light, the more they win. This game has terrific play appeal to kids and adults and has consistently been the top earning roll down on location.

Size: 25¼" W x 38" D x 74½" H
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Congress strips Internet Gaming Prohibition from budget bill

Heeding the advice of the United States Department of Justice, the Internet industry, regulators, and fantasy sports fans, Congress adjourned for 1998 after stripping language from major legislation that would have attempted to prohibit Internet gambling.

The language, introduced by Arizona Senator Jon Kyl (R), would have made the placement of any "bet or wager" over the Internet a federal felony. Included in this definition of gambling would have been activities such as fantasy football, rotisserie-league baseball, fantasy investment challenges, and other games. It would have also prohibited some online contests.

Industry and consumer groups protested passage of the legislation on the grounds that it could have the perverse effect of exposing minors to inappropriate Internet content.

Sue Schneider, chairman of the Interactive Gaming Council (IGC), one of the groups leading the fight against the prohibition of Internet gaming, explained: "The Kyl bill would have forced responsible operators of Internet games in other legal jurisdictions underground. In doing so, it would have eliminated any incentives for operators to keep children out of gambling sites."

The IGC has called for a global regulatory mechanism to ensure that all games are fair, minors and problem gamblers are screened out, appropriate taxes are paid by both operators and consumers, and the privacy of individuals is protected.

"Almost 15 percent of the world's governments already recognize and permit some form of interactive wagering. I am hopeful that the U.S. Congress will recognize that the best way to protect the interests of American businesses and individuals is to impose a strict, but fair regulatory regime instead of an unenforceable prohibition," said Schneider.

Play Meter sponsors Game Developers Conference

Play Meter has joined the Game Developers Conference (GDC) as a sponsor. The Conference, now in its 13th year, serves as the informational, networking, and community-building event for the game development professional.

The GDC attracts some 7,500 qualified developers who comb the expo and attend over 300 classes taught by the industry's best and brightest. The colorful GDC brochure asks, "Which technology market has quadrupled spending in the last five years, drives the fastest-growing segment of the consumer electronics and entertainment industries, and fuels advances in hardware and software? The answer: game developers, skilled buyers of tools, technologies, and services."

The coin-op industry is looking seriously at the possibility of attracting talent from the home game developing community, and this is the perfect show to see what is happening in that arena. The show will be held in San Jose, Calif., March 15-19, at the San Jose Convention Center.

Several new events will be a part of the GDC in 1999: the Independent Games Festival, the Game Art Screening Room, and the GAMEXecutive Conference.

The Festival provides a forum to showcase the work of independent game developers, foster recognition of games as an artform, and facilitate relationships between game developers and publishers.

For more details, check out these specific Web sites: GDC main site (www.gdconf.com), Independent Games Festival (www.indiegames.com), and GAMEXecutive Conference (www.gamexecutive.com). For additional information on the overall GDC, contact Kathy Schoback, (415)356-3406; e- mail (kschoback@mfi.com).

Roth Novelty under new management

Roth Novelty has been acquired by a company owned by Donald DeRemer. The business will continue to be operated under the Roth Novelty Co. name.

Philip Roth said in a letter to his customers, "You have known and worked closely with Don for almost as many years as you have known and worked with me. You can expect the same attention and service in the filling of all your needs. Obviously, if I did not have the confidence that Don would continue my family's tradition of and reputation for integrity, honesty, fair dealing, and outstanding service, I would have never permitted him to continue use of the Roth name."

Philip noted that he will be assisting Don in the transition over the next few months. Don and Philip can be reached at (717)824-9994.

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Create a tidal wave of enthusiasm that will have customers coming back for more… Bowlingo, the coin-operated bowling lane, smaller than conventional bowling and developed to appeal to families, novice and experienced players alike.
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Bowlingo has been generating fun and profits for over fifteen years with thousands of installations worldwide in arcades, family entertainment centers, pubs, leisure centers and retail outlets, not to mention actual bowling centers.

Bowlingo generates popularity along with player appeal and has one of the fastest return on investments of the industry. The structure of the Bowlingo system is built on a wood truss foundation. The lanes are 100% phenolic with a simulated wood grain surface. The result: a virtually indestructible synthetic lane designed to withstand extreme operating conditions and provide superior durability with low maintenance costs. Based on the initial investment, independent studies have shown that the R.O.I. for Bowlingo is usually a few months and rarely more than a year. Translation: Bowlingo is a solid investment providing flexibility that will continue to meet your evolving needs down the road.

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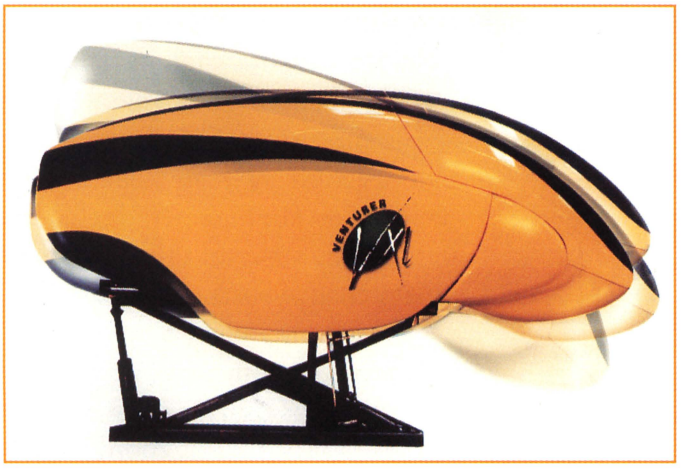
Thomson launches new simulation products



Thomson Entertainment's new Venturer Vxl simulator.

Thomson Entertainment's T4 motion theater platform.

Thomson Entertainment launched three new simulation products at the IAAPA show in Dallas. Thomson's self-described "jewel in the crown" is the Venturer Vxl. Features include an executive jet-style stairway in the nose of the capsule which reduces the required floor space by 40 percent. Aircraft-style seat fixings enable flexible seating configurations up to a maximum of 19 passengers, and each row of seats is tiered for unobstructed views. Also included is the new Thomson Entertainment MPEG II Digital Picture System (DPS), permitting flexible-term rental of ride films.

The first systems will be available with the existing three-axis, hydraulic motion base from the Venturer mid-capacity capsule range. Customers with either the current generation Venturer V14 and V19 simulators will be able to make an upgrade to the new Vxl capsule..

The Vxl is also available as a fully mobile product on a special trailer with integrated power supply.

Two new compact theater systems were also introduced. The Venturer T4 is a four-seat passenger platform operating on a three-axis, electric motion system. It is designed to operate in buildings with ceiling heights of less than four meters. Thomson has already received an order for four T4 systems for a 16-seat simulation theater in South Africa.

The Venturer T10 is a 10-seat passenger platform operating on a six-axis, electric motion system, also designed for environments with low ceiling clearance.

In addition to Thomson's range of 2D ride films, the new theater platforms can also be supplied with 3D experiences or a switchable 2D/3D system. On display for the first time was the new Titan 3D system, which allows high-quality images to be projected onto huge curved screens up to 30-meters wide. Also on display was the Venturer S2 interactive.

For operators of the Venturer S2 passive product, a sixth compilation of five rides has been released for the system, which is available with both hydraulic and electric motion. For more information, contact Thomson Entertainment, +44 (0) 1293 563533; fax +44 (0) 1293 563388; e-mail (entertain@ttsl.co.uk).

SNK now sues Atlus over photo sticker booths

SNK Corp. and SNK Corp. of America have filed suit against Atlus Co. Ltd. of Japan, Atlus Dream Entertainment Co. Ltd., its U.S. subsidiary, and ImageWare Software Inc. alleging that the defendants illegally blocked SNK's entry into the potentially lucrative U.S. market for photo sticker booths. SNK's complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the northern district of California, alleges violations of federal and state antitrust laws, malicious prosecution, and defamation.

The suit claims that Atlus and its U.S. subsidiary, Atlus Dream, fell behind SNK in the introduction of photo sticker booths into the U.S. market. The suit further alleges that, in an effort to buy time to catch up with SNK's marketing initiatives, Atlus Dream filed and publicized a baseless patent infringement lawsuit against SNK that entangled the company in lengthy unfounded litigation with Atlus Dream. ImageWare Software, the licensor of the patent, joined Atlus Dream in publicizing the suit.

SNK contested the patent infringement suit and challenged the validity of the patent and Atlus' right to sue. After several months of litigation, Atlus Dream dismissed its claims against SNK, and Atlus Dream and ImageWare agreed never again to sue SNK for infringement of the subject of the patent, according to SNK.

SNK's current complaint asks that a jury award it compensatory damages, trebled under the federal antitrust laws, as well as general and punitive damages for malicious prosecution and defamation under California law, and injunctive relief.

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Family Golf Centers contracts with Alpha-BET

Alpha-BET Entertainment's president Frank Seninsky (c) is congratulated by Family Golf Centers Inc. senior vice president Bill Reitzig (r) and division vice president and general manager George McAuliffe.

Alpha-BET Entertainment of East Brunswick, N.J., has signed a national operating agreement for all Family Golf Supercenters. Alpha-BET is a joint venture of distributor organization Betson Enterprises and operating company Alpha-Omega Amusements.

In addition to the 113 facilities currently in operation, Family Golf has developed three supercenters, featuring its Sports Plus concept, placed in Lake Grove, N.Y., (168,000 sq. ft.), Cincinnati, Ohio, (170,000 sq. ft.), and Denver, Colo., (130,000 sq. ft.). The next site, in New Rochelle, N.Y., (135,000 sq. ft.), is scheduled for a May 1999 opening.

Alphá-BET has been operating and servicing the 225+ games at Sports Plus-Lake Grove since the facility opened in 1996, and was involved in the finalization of the attraction mix, facility floor plan, and games layout.

Bill Reitzig, Family Golf Centers' senior vice president, said, "We chose Alpha-BET Entertainment as our exclusive game operator for our larger facilities because of its national presence, extensive experience, and excellent working relationship that has developed between our two companies over the last two years. Frank Seninsky, Alpha-BET's president, has really impressed us with his professionalism, vast knowledge, and leadership in the industry. He will be an asset in assisting our management team as we expand our successful Sports Plus concept in the future."

"I am very pleased to be working closely with Family Golf," Seninsky said, "and especially on a daily basis with Bill Reitzig and George McAuliffe. Family Golf has the resources, leadership, and financial genius of Dominic Chang (CEO) and Kris Thampi (COO) to take it to the pinnacle of the family entertainment industry."

For more information, contact Alpha-BET, (732)254-3773; fax (732)254-6223; e-mail (alphaomegainc @juno.com).

Dave & Buster's gets increase

Dave & Buster's has increased it revolving credit facility to $1 million. This increase doubles the company's current facility and will allow the company to execute its rapid growth plans without having to re-enter the equity market, according to co-founder Dave Corriveau.

Co-founder Buster Corley added, "With this favorable credit facility in place, we will continue to focus our management team's efforts on expanding the D&B concept into the next century."

There are currently 15 Dave & Buster's locations in the United States and two in the United Kingdom under an agreement with Bass Plc. The most recent location opened in Orange County, Calif., on Nov. 5. The 16th store and the second one in Orange County is located at The Block at Orange and is the first store to open in the county's newest entertainment venue.

James Industries will represent Adaptive

Representatives from James Industries and Adaptive Micro Systems on the occasion of the launch of their new marketing campaign.

James Industries Inc. has been appointed as the exclusive marketing representative for Adaptive Micro Systems for the amusement, gaming, and lottery industries. Adaptive says it is the world's largest manufacturer of LED displays and is headquartered in Milwaukee, Wis. Adaptive also maintains a large manufacturing facility in Malaysia.

Doron's SRV will be used by students for marine education.

Doron takes students to new learning level

In Rochester, N.Y., the Monroe #1 Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) has purchased a new SRV from Doron Precision Systems Inc. The capsule will be used by seventh and eighth grade students as an underwater exploratory vehicle.

This new hands-on lesson in marine biology will complement the BOCES' Challenger Learning Center—an interactive space science program that also utilizes a simulator.

"We're excited about the fact that we're on the verge of a new form of instruction," said Jerry Cummings, assistant superintendent for technology.

Doron claims that this underwater program is the first of its kind in the world and that educators are still developing lesson plans for the experience. It's being christened the "BUBL" which stands for Biological Underwater Bathysphere Laboratory.

Students will board the BUBL for a simulated "trip" through a series of underground river channels, hidden passageways, unexpected encounters, and powerful currents until they reach the simulated "waters" of Lake Ontario.

Once the students reach their "underwater" laboratory, they will participate in a variety of explorations and experiments requiring the use of mathematics, science, history, archeology, and technology.

"The SRV makes the learning experience fun for the students," said Doron spokesman Donald Wenzinger. "They are far more likely to remember what they learn by participating in this simulation than they would by listening to a lecture.... this innovative hands-on approach to learning about the world around us can, and should, be repeated in school districts throughout the country."

Doron hopes that as many as 18 school districts will participate in the program.

Doron is customizing the interior of the SRV to accommodate the specific needs of students participating in the program. The SRV will also contain several sealed compartments that will be used to collect "samples" during the journey.

The SRV was designed, engineered, and manufactured at Doron's 100,000-square-foot facility in Binghampton, N.Y. The simulator features a 3DOF motion system which uses Doron's hydraulic system.

For more information, contact Doron Precision Systems Inc., (607)772-1610; fax (607)772-6760.

GameWorks celebrates birthday

As part of its anniversary celebration, GameWorks in Grapevine, Texas, hosted a family party for GRACE, a local non-profit relief agency which provides food, clothing, and other emergency assistance to people who are in need. Later that evening GameWorks hosted its first birthday party.

The "GameWorks After Dark" birthday bash included a variety of adult-oriented activities and great entertainment prizes, including tickets to the sold-out Lyle Lovett concert at the Bass Performance Hall complete with limousine transportation. The evening's featured activity was the Playmate Competition, where a man and woman are randomly selected every 30 minutes to go head-to-head for prizes on one of the many games featured at GameWorks. In addition, GameWorks hosted a women-only Indy competition and *Daytona 2* couples challenge.

"We are honored to have included GRACE in our anniversary celebration," said Mike Patterson, general manager of GameWorks. "This event allowed families to enjoy a worry-free afternoon full of games, food, and fun. GRACE is a thoughtful organization, and we look forward to continuing to support additional ongoing programs."

"We've entertained thousands of guests over the past year, and we look forward to welcoming more people from Grapevine and the surrounding areas to come play with us," said Michael Montgomery, president and CEO of Sega GameWorks. "Our anniversary party emphasizes our commitment to making a night out at GameWorks a very engaging experience."

To enhance the enjoyment of all GameWorks guests, GameWorks Grapevine has introduced a new age policy that designates specific day times for the enjoyment of kids and families, teens, and adults. After 8:00 p.m., GameWorks is open only to those who are either over the age of 18, accompanied by a parent or guardian, or seated in the GameWorks Grill.

Under the direction of Steven Spielberg, GameWorks was created to be the quintessential entertainment destination. People of all ages can play and interact in dramatically themed neighborhoods that offer a variety of high energy, visually stimulating, and relaxing environments. Five GameWorks are successfully operating, each offering a multitude of games. All GameWorks have full-service restaurants and bars, except in Seattle, where the GameWorks pub features fresh beer brewed on site, in addition to other beer and wine.

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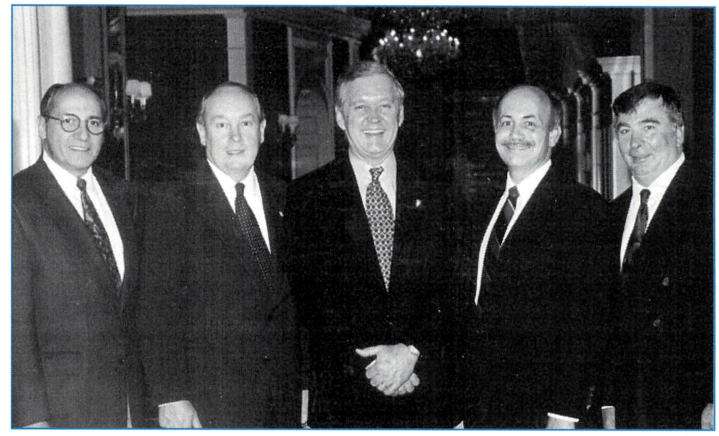

New NAMA officers, (l-r): Anthony J. Gagliardi, Alan J. Suitor, J.E. "Eddie" Hicks, Richard M. Geerdes, and Dan Sofie.

NAMA elects officers

The National Automatic Merchandising Association National Expo took place Oct. 15-17 at the Lakeside Center at McCormick Place in Chicago, Ill. Education seminars and exhibits of products and services for the vending industry highlighted the show, which drew 7,413 attendees.

In addition, the Expo was the occasion to elect new officers and board of directors members as well as to announce award presentations.

G. Michael Cronk (l) of NAMA with three of the Chairman's Legislative Award winners, (l-r): Thomas C. Knight, Polly Reber, and Jeffrey Smith.

More award winners, (l-r): John Boyle, G. Michael Cronk of NAMA, Alan J. Davies, and Jeff West.

New officers are: J.E. "Eddie" Hicks of Prestige Services, chairman of the board; Richard M. Geerdes, president and CEO of NAMA; Alan J. Suitor of Automatic Products international ltd., senior vice chairman; Dan J. Sofie of B & P Vending, vice chairman; and Anthony J. Gagliardi of Canteen Vending Services, secretary/treasurer.

Elected to the board of directors are: Ed Backus, vice president of Pepsi-Cola North America's National Account Sales Group; James E. Conlan, external affairs director of M & M/Mars; Tina L. Elliott, vice president of Tomdra Inc.; and Steven Ross, president of Bertsch Vending.

Re-elected to the board are: Frank A. Feist, vice president of Five Star Food Services; Dod Hamre Jr., president of Automatic Food Services Inc.; J.E. "Eddie" Hicks, president and CEO of Prestige Services; Charles S. Hutchinson, president of Cliff Weil Vending Services; and Alan J. Suitor, president and CEO of Automatic Products international ltd.

Winners of the Chairman's Legislative Award included Thomas C. Knight of Knight's Vending, Polly Reber of MDVA, Jeffrey T. Smith of All Star Services, John Boyle of Covenco Inc., Alan J. Davies of Canteen Vending Services, and Jeff West of Dairy Express.

Fun Works closes in Louisiana

Fun Works indoor amusement park in Metairie, La., has officially closed. The well-known facility, which opened in November 1986, was the brainchild of Frank Scurlock, who was only 24 at the time of it's opening. Frank's wife, Patty Scurlock, has been the comptroller of the business for many years.

Fun Works originally opened as Fun Factory. It has served as the model for other indoor parks which have sprung into existence since that time. This was the beginning of a new form of entertainment called pay-for-play. Instead of going to a public park, patrons could go to a private facility they knew would be safe, affordable, and entertaining.

Fun Works is an all-indoors amusement facility specializing in children's parties, group activities, and family fun. All of the activities are interactive in nature. Some of the primary attractions are the Sea of Balls, Space Walk, Cargo Nets, Giant Slides, Ant Wall, and the Cheese Maze. In addition to this area, Scurlock created an area called Discovery World, a high-tech science museum. Discovery World features exhibits and interactive displays such as the Shadow Room, Laser Tech, the Musical Sensor Room, Louisiana Hurricane, Pin Boards, Sound Studio, and other educational presentations. In addition, Fun Works contained a host of video and redemption games such as *Skee Ball,* and *Whac-A-Mole.*

The closing of Fun Works will certainly be of great loss to the children of the community, according to the Scurlocks. They attributed the closure to several reasons, including the ever-increasing cost of rent at the 18,000-square-foot location and the current legal liability of such facilities.

The Scurlocks are also involved in numerous other ventures of educational and recreational value. One is a new version of an indoor park, which can bring the initial dream of Fun Works back to life with newer, bigger, better high-tech fun. The Scurlocks are also involved in the rental and manufacturing of inflatable amusement rides commonly know as "Space Walks" on a national basis.

For more information, call (504) 887-5678 or (504) 464-6026, ext. 110.

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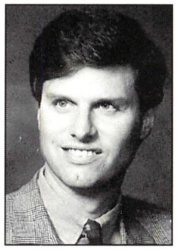
Chilton moves to Boulder

In June, Randy Chilton sold his company, Chilton Vending to American Coin Merchandising, d/b/a Sugarloaf Creations. Randy recently informed the industry that he and his wife Deanna are relocating from Wichita, Kan., to Boulder, Colo., where he will work out of the corporate offices of Sugarloaf. As vice president of amusement games development, Randy will be buying and scheduling all of the video and redemption equipment for the company, working to develop this new product category for Sugarloaf.



The Wichita Sugarloaf office will still be operated at 300 S. Topeka, formerly Chilton Vending, and will also be a corporate facility for Sugarloaf's amusement games. The amusement games for Sugarloaf, according to Randy, will flow through the Wichita office for preparation work.

In addition to Randy's move, Glen Coker has been hired as the new Wichita office general manager. Glen has a background in amusement games with Discovery Zone and, most recently, AMF bowling centers. Glen can be reached at (316)262-3538, ext.227.

APi is turning 50

Automatic Products international ltd. will recognize its 50th year in business in 1999. APi is a manufacturer of vending machines distributed in the United States and in over 40 countries worldwide. Originally named Automatic Products, the St. Paul, Minn., company was formed in 1949 with the design and manufacture of the Smokeshop electro-mechanical cigarette vending machine. The Smokeshop line went on to become a market leader in its category and was manufactured until 1992.

Highlights of the company's history include the development and introduction of its first glass-front snack and candy merchandiser in 1976. It was the first predecessor to APi's current line of snack/candy merchandisers, the 120 Series Snackshops.

The purchase of Refreshment Machinery Industries, a coffee machine manufacturer, in 1981, marked APi's entry into the hot beverage merchandiser category. APi currently markets a wide variety of hot beverage merchandisers. For more information, contact APi, (612)224-4391; fax (612)224-5559.

Online store will feature Midway's fall lineup

Midway Home Entertainment Inc., a subsidiary of Midway Games Inc., has announced that it has opened an online store on its Web site, (www.midway.com), allowing consumers to purchase Midway's most recent and popular titles over the Internet. Digital River, the leading provider of electronic commerce outsourcing for Internet software sales, will be Midway's online distribution partner. Currently, *NFL Blitz, Mortal Kombat 4, GEX64: Enter the Gecko,* and *Rampage World Tour* on multiple platforms are available for purchase at the site. Midway's entire fall 1998 lineup will be offered by Christmas, followed by a more extensive catalog in 1999.

Exploring the growing electronic distribution movement, Midway has opened its online store to expand its consumer reach, continue establishing its online community, and generate repeat online sales by offering special premiums with every purchase. Midway plans to expand its online catalog to include games such as *San Francisco Rush: Extreme Racing, Mortal Kombat Trilogy, NBA Hangtime* as well as classic compilations featuring *Asteroids, Centipede, Paperboy, Defender,* and *Joust.*

"Electronic commerce is a great complement to our traditional distribution methods," said Paula Cook, director of marketing for Midway Home Entertainment. "Expanding our expertise onto the Internet paves a new road for the distribution of Midway's quality titles, and also provides a great convenience to our customers, allowing them to shop from their desktop."

"We are pleased to partner with Midway Home Entertainment to provide its lineup of quality games to Web customers," said Joel Ronning, founder and chief executive officer of Digital River. "Midway's top-selling games like *NFL Blitz* and *Mortal Kombat 4* make a tremendous addition to our online inventory of products."

Midway will be marketing its electronic commerce store by advertising on major video game Web sites and search engines as well as within the company's print advertisements.

For more information, contact Midway, (773)961-1000; fax (773)961-1060; Web site (www.midway.com).

P & E moves

P & E Technologies is relocating to a bigger, state-of-the-art facility to meet customer demands for its products. The new address, phone, and fax are: 5140 W. Hurley Pond Road, Farmingdale, NJ 07727; (732)751-1515; fax (732)751-1015.

Correction

In the November issue's "Beyond the Playfield," Robert Vittitoe of Southgate Amusement was incorrectly identified with SunBelt Amusement. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

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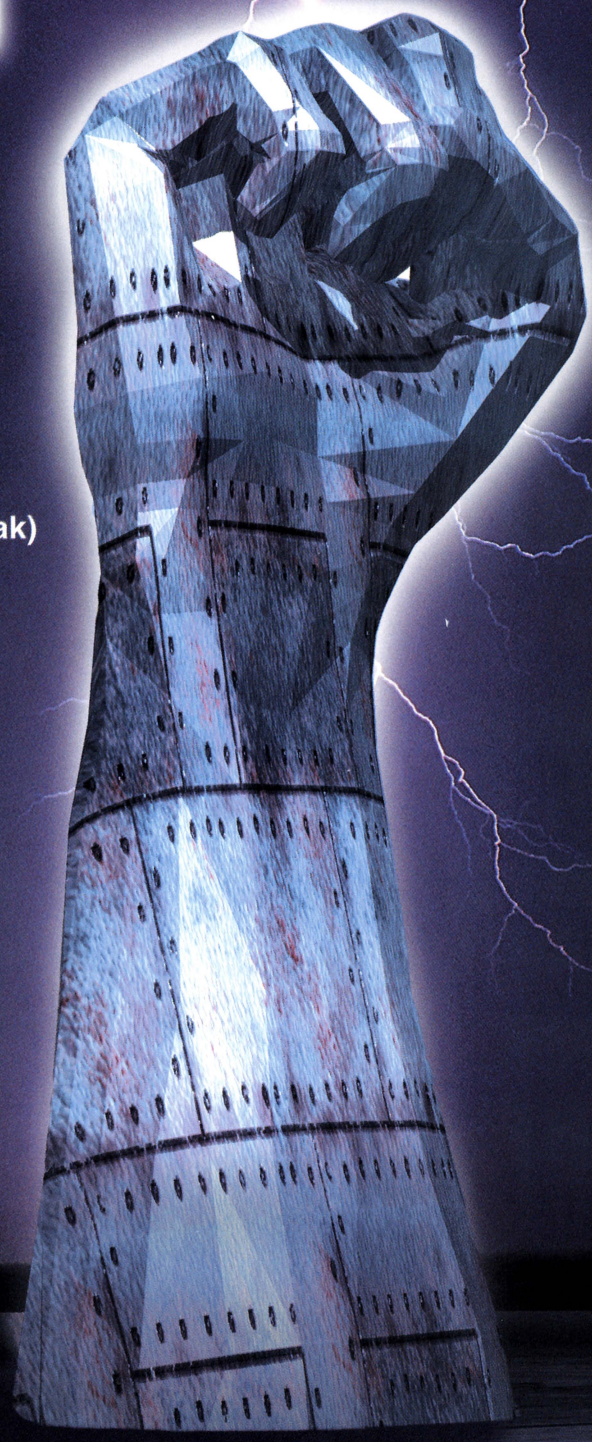

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Family Sports opens

Sports Plus of Denver, Colo. hosted a grand opening party on Nov. 12 for its new Family Sports Family Entertainment and Golf Center at 6901 S. Peoria in Englewood, Colo. Features of the new center include Colorado's first double-deck heated driving range, a nine-hole executive golf course and miniature golf course, a golf and hockey pro shop, rides, games, two NHL regulation ice skating rinks, and conference meeting rooms.

Ribbon cutting ceremonies at the new center included celebrity autograph signings by the Avalanche hockey team, food, and entertainment. For more information, contact Family Sports, (303)708-9500; fax (303)768-8410.

NIGA appoints training director

The National Indian Gaming Association (NIGA) has hired Sheila Morago as the new director of training. Morago, an enrolled member of the Gila River Pima Tribe, succeeds Gay Kingman, who recently resigned.

Since 1994, Morago has served as the director of marketing for Gila River Casinos, and had a hand in designing and implementing highly successful campaigns for marketing and community/public relations. Her primary focus at NIGA will be on the association's training efforts; however, she will also be involved in public relations.

NIGA developed the NIGA Seminar Institute to protect and preserve the general welfare of tribes striving for self-sufficiency through gaming enterprises. Morago will be responsible for enhancing current programs and developing new ones. Morago can be reached at (202)546-7711.

Millennium Entertainment opens

Drew Pawlak, co-founder and vice president of development for Ultrazone, has resigned his day-to-day responsibilities to start a new company, Millennium Entertainment Group & Associates (MEGA).

Millennium Entertainment was started as a consulting firm to assist companies which are interested in rolling out entertainment concepts to multiple locations. Pawlak said, "Our mission is developing and implementing plans that work; that's our goal." He added that MEGA will also service clients in the gaming industry.

In the past six years with Ultrazone, Pawlak was closely involved in all phases of development at over 70 locations. He has been active with many international projects during the conceptual stages and business plan development.

Pawlak continued, "After much discussion and contemplation with the other board members, we came to the conclusion that this move will allow me to pursue other ventures and that Ultrazone could continue to maintain a long-term focus and commitment to the service and support of its customers. In fact, despite my desire to pursue new opportunities, I remain convinced that Ultrazone will succeed in achieving its goals. I'm excited to continue being a principal and maintain my position on Ultrazone's board of directors."

Pawlak can be reached at (702)451-4841; Web site (MEGA@ivcm.com).

[Editor's note: We are pleased to have Drew join Play Meter's *list of writers. He will be contributing articles on subjects he knows best, beginning with laser tag. We think he will be an asset to our publication and a wealth of knowledge for our readers.]*

Ferris converts PC game software for coin-op

Ferris Productions Inc., developer of high-tech products and systems for the out-of-home entertainment industry, has signed commercial licensing agreements with two of the leading PC game software developers, Activision Inc. and Blue Byte Software Inc. The agreements provide Ferris Productions with the right to convert each developer's game software into coin-operated games. Coin-op versions of PC games were demonstrated in Ferris Productions' booth at Fun Expo '98.

Activision and Blue Byte Software are among the first PC developers to establish partnerships with Ferris Productions. Under the agreements, Ferris Productions will pay a licensing fee to each company and in exchange obtain the right to use Activision's *Heavy Gear I* and *Heavy Gear II* games and *Extreme Assault* from Blue Byte Software. Using its Universe Control Board (UCB) technology and macro software, Ferris Productions will convert all three games into coin-op games without making any software modifications to the applications or operating systems.

Ferris Productions will provide coin-op versions of PC games in both virtual reality and ArcadePC formats. *Heavy Gear I* and *Extreme Assault* are currently available. *Heavy Gear II* is scheduled to be available on the ArcadePC system at the end of the year.

Ferris Productions will distribute the converted games, including the game's cabinet graphics and control panel, to LBE and other amusement venue owners and operators. Ferris Productions also offers operators a cabinet that will run unlimited versions of game software, making the cabinet a one time purchase.

Also, Ferris Productions is working on the conversion of PC games from other developers such as LucasArts Entertainment Company and Ritual Entertainment. For more information, contact Ferris Productions, (972)869-7655; (972)869-7688; Web site (www.ferrisvr.com).

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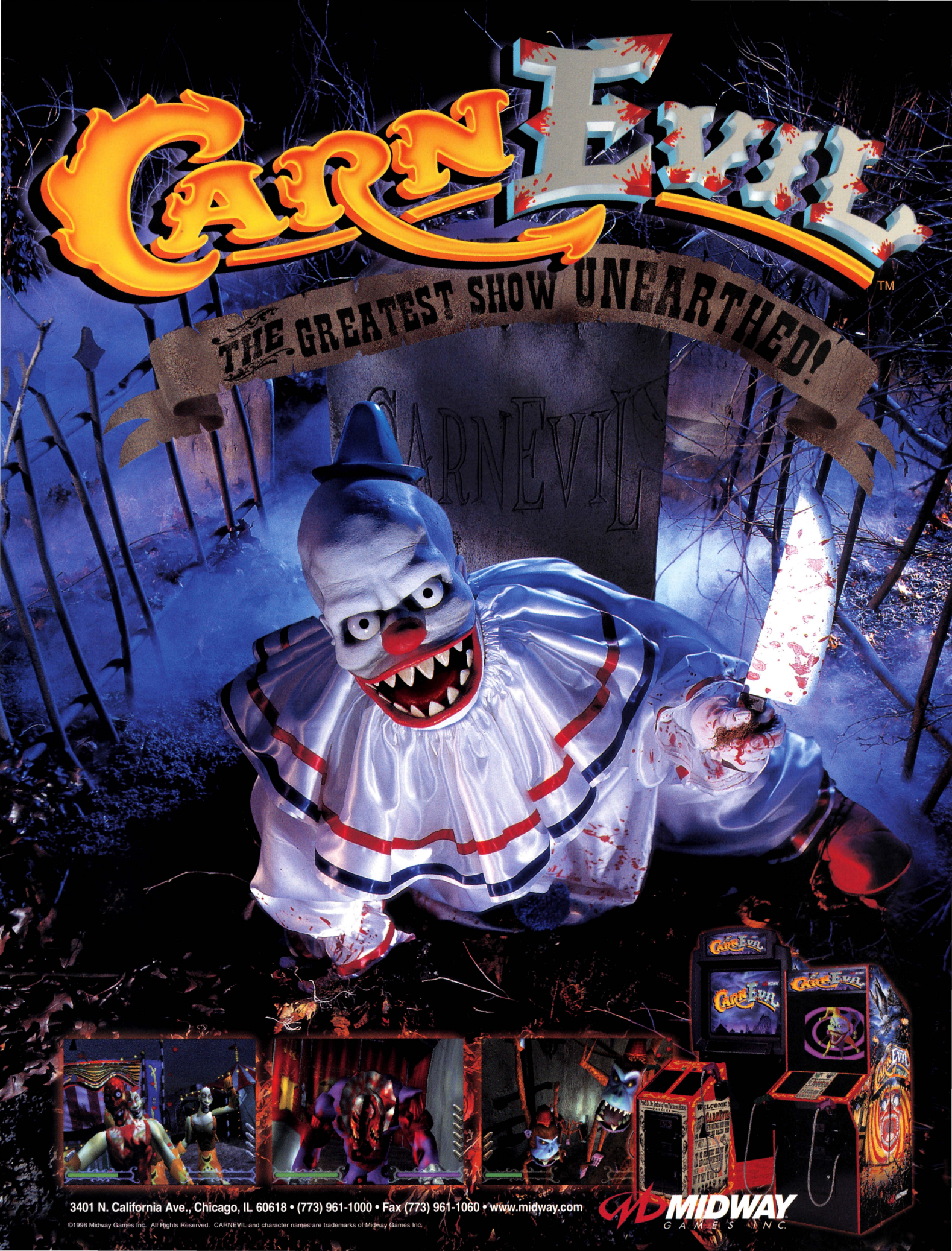

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MIDWAY GAMES INC.

Play-By-Play reports fiscal year results

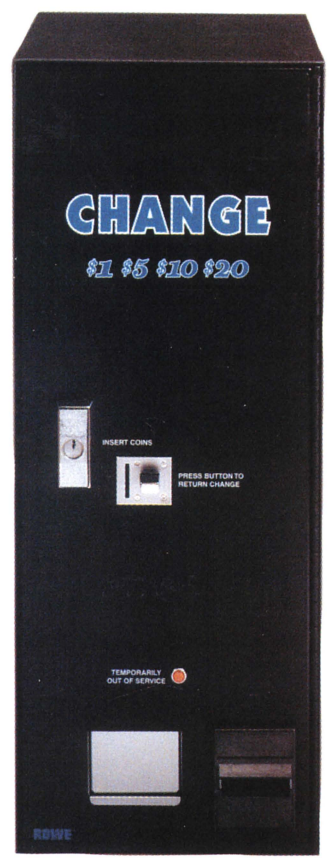
Play-By-Play Toys & Novelties Inc. has announced financial results for the fiscal fourth quarter and year ended July 31, 1998. The increase in revenues and earnings are attributed by Play-By-Play principally to significant sales growth in domestic amusement, Europe, and Latin America.

Arturo G. Torres, chairman and chief executive officer of Play-By-Play, commented, "Although the domestic retail market outlook has been weak, particularly since Toys "R" Us has made significant inventory reductions and recently announced the closing of 90 stores, we are pleased with our financial performance for both the quarter and year. Sales from the amusement line of our business and international sales continue to exceed our expectations. We believe our international growth will continue to be very strong through fiscal 1999 and retail should begin to show good improvement during the second half of 1999. Our success internationally and in domestic amusement distribution is the direct result of the many strategic initiatives we have implemented during 1997 and 1998, including the opening of a sales and sourcing office in Hong Kong, inspection and sample development facility in China, in-house product development facility in San Antonio, and development of a distribution network for Latin America."

Mark Gawlik, president and chief operating officer of Play-By-Play, said, "During the past year Play-By-Play entered into many new licensing agreements, several of which have surpassed our internal plan. Recently we were awarded the amusement license for the United States, Europe, and Canada to design, manufacture, and distribute a line of toys based on the characters in the popular "Garfield" comic strip. Garfield is a timeless character who is recognized throughout the world and is expected to further strengthen our international and domestic amusement sales during fiscal 1999. During the year, Play-By-Play was awarded the master plush licenses by Warner Bros. Consumer Products to distribute its Looney Tunes and Cartoon Network characters in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa as well as the worldwide licensing rights for Baby Looney Tunes. According to Gawlik, these licenses are exciting for Play-By-Play, because they allow the company to increase its line of innovative products and contribute heavily to its success in the international markets.

"Looking to 1999, we are very excited about our business," Gawlik continued. "*Family Fun* magazine recently rated our Talkin' Tunes plush toys the number one rated plush toy for five-to-seven-year-old children this holiday season. This prestigious award is reflective of our continued success in developing creative, desirable toys. Also, the recent launch of the new direct mail division provides Play-By-Play with an additional channel of distribution for its broad line of products. The catalog will enhance our efforts to become the dominant supplier of plush products and novelties to the worldwide retail, amusement, and now consumer markets."

Rowe's new $20 bill software



Rowe's bill changers and acceptors will handle $20 bills.

Rowe International is conducting testing of software to accept the newly designed $20 bills and will soon release software that will handle both old and new $20 bills.

Tom Kozlik, vice president of marketing, said, "Keeping the acceptance rate as high as possible while not accepting bogus bills is Rowe's design goal. Rowe's target is to release new software in November that will handle both old and new $20 bills for the BC line of bill changers, RBA-7 bill acceptors, and CBA-4 bill acceptors."

Operators can update the BC line of changers equipped with PC boards manufactured after 1992. BC-1200, BC-1400, and BC-3500 changers with PC boards manufactured prior to 1992 can be updated by using a current version board.

Rowe recently introduced a new line of Century bill changers. "For those Century changers using a factory installed Rowe CBA-4 bill acceptor, the new $20 bill software will be provided to operators at no charge," said Joel Friedman, executive vice president.

For more information, contact Rowe International, (616)243-3633; fax(616)243-9414; Web site (www.roweami.com).

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G.L. Technology enhances *Putting Challenge II*

G.L. Technology Inc. has announced enhancements to its popular *Putting Challenge II,* which, according to G.L. Technology, is the world's only putting machine with changing contours. *Putting Challenge II* now offers a new side and front plexiglas design which minimizes top glare for golfers when putting on its different contours and trying to "read the breaks."

According to Gina Cho, vice president of G.L. Technology, "When my dad, Sam Kim, invented the original *Putting Challenge* back in 1990, he had a revolutionary idea which was a huge hit and the first ever coin-op golf game. Our licensing partner, I.C.E., did a phenomenal job in marketing and selling the game to the con op industry eight years ago. But like anything else, you can always make improvements.

"We have now completely refined our original concept with the end-user in mind, the operator and location. This new model is super space efficient (8' x 4') and technically superior. As a result we have been able to successfully market *Putting Challenge II* to the entire golf industry and beyond, including pro shops, golf courses, indoor driving ranges, retailers, special events companies, charities, associations, corporations, etc."

G.L. Technology's *Putting Challenge II*

For more information, contact G.L. Technology Inc., (847)806-1700; fax (847)806-1234; Web site (www.gl-tech.com).

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Capcom's *Fighters Edge* program a success

Capcom has announced that its *Fighters Edge* promotion, a frequent buyers program, has grown to more than 35,000 registrants in its first 90 days. *Fighters Edge* is an ongoing program to support Capcom's '98 line-up of fighting games including, *X-Men vs. Street Fighter, Rival Schools, Darkstalkers 3,* and *Pocket Fighter.*

Fighters Edge, launched in June of 1998, is a program whereby consumers earn and collect points with each purchase of specially marked *Fighters Edge* PlayStation games. As the collection of points accrue, consumers can redeem them for merchandise items that span from *Fighters Edge* T-shirts and hats to a mountain bike or a brand-new snowboard. Also, Capcom has teamed up with *GamePro,* a multiple platform gaming magazine, to provide a sample copy of *GamePro* with a discounted subscription offer available only to *Fighters Edge* members.

For more information, contact Capcom, (408)774-0500; fax (408)774-3995; Web site (www.capcom.com).

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Midway Games reports first quarter results

Midway Games Inc. has announced its results of operations for the fiscal first quarter ended Sept. 30, 1998 and previewed its expectations for the second fiscal quarter ending Dec. 31, 1998.

Fiscal 1999 first quarter revenues increased 21.2 percent. Net income increased 35.5 percent compared to net income in the prior year period. Net income for the Sept. 30, 1998 quarter alos increased, because of a reduction in coin-op video game cost of sales. The reduction is from a net recovery relating to purchased parts overcharges from certain suppliers in prior years.

Home video game revenues increased in the fiscal 1999 first quarter over the prior year period. Shipments of next generation units increased 109 percent in the first quarter of fiscal 1999 compared to the prior year period with the largest percentage of the increase from Sony PlayStation units. Next generation video game revenues increased 106 percent. Home video game gross profit increased to 54.8 percent of revenues in the quarter ended Sept. 30, 1998 compared to 51.7 percent in the prior year first quarter due to an increase in sales of Sony PlayStation units which carry a higher gross profit percentage.

During the Sept. 30, 1998 quarter, the company released two new home video game products on three platforms: two for Nintendo 64, one for Sony PlayStation, and one for PCs. Midway's best selling video games during the quarter were *NFL Blitz, GEX: Enter the Gecko,* and *Mortal Kombat 4.*

The current year first quarter included initial sales of *NFL Blitz '99, Vapor TRX* and *Site 4, Area 51*, and continuing sales of *Radical Bikers* and *Touchmaster.*

For the fiscal quarter ending Dec. 31, 1998 the company anticipates delays in the introduction of certain coin-operated and home video games. Revenues for the quarter compared to the Dec. 31, 1997 quarter are expected to increase approximately two percent to five percent. Sales of next generation home video game units are expected to increase between 17 percent to 22 percent.

Coin-op revenues are expected to decrease between 20 percent and 25 percent from the prior year quarter. Gross profit is expected to decrease by approximately two percent to four percent. Decreased gross profit along with a 30 percent to 35 percent higher product development expense and selling expense are expected to result in decreased earnings for the quarter. Net income per share for the Dec. 31, 1998 quarter is anticipated to be between $0.28 and $0.32 per share compared to $0.48 per share for the quarter ended Dec. 31, 1997.

Ticket kit for *Pac-Man*

Now any *Pac-Man* or *Ms. Pac-Man* can be fitted with a ticket dispenser. Two-Bit Score Amusements Inc. is offering a pop-in board that installs in minutes and comes complete with a wiring harness ready to plug into any standard ticket dispenser. The harness includes ticket meter wires.

Features include operator adjustables for the number of tickets dispensed when players eat fruit and when each scene ends. Built-in on-screen ticket error messages do not affect normal game play. For more information, contact Two-Bit Score Amusements Inc., (512)447-8888; fax (512)447-8895; Web site (www.pacman.com).

Psygnosis releases new games and updates

Psygnosis has released a 3D accelerated five-pack of games for the PC-CD ROM. Included in the pack are the *G Police,* in which players prowl the skylines and a weapons-loaded gunship; the arcade racer *Wipeout XL*; the fantasy shooter *Shadow Master*; *Formula One Championship Edition*; and the deep-sea, swashbuckling adventure, *Shipwreckers.*

In addition, Psygnosis has also released *Sentinel Returns,* the sequel to the 1980s strategy game, for both PC and PlayStation; first-person shooter *Hired Guns* for the PC; and the robot battle game *Metal Fatigue* for PC.

For more information, contact Psygnosis, (650)287-6576; Web site (www.psygnosis.com).

C&N Sales inducted into Business Hall of Fame

C&N Sales has been inducted into the Mankato Area Business Hall of Fame in Mankato, Minn. Besides providing games to establishments, C&N operates Fun & Games arcades in Mankato; Marshall; Sioux Falls, S.D.; and Spencer, Iowa.

C&N Sales was honored for its long-standing successful business operation as well as its community efforts to raise money for such causes as the fight against ALS (known as Lou Gehrig's disease), the Heart Foundation, the ECHO Food Shelf, and Dickinson County Hospital.

C&N Sales started in 1928 as a restaurant/billiard parlor in St. Peter and is now in its third generation of operation by the Norberg family with chairman Harlow Norberg and his son, president Tim Norberg. Harlow's daughter Tami had been involved in the family business for 18 years before deciding to pursue another line of work. She served as president of AMOA in 1995, the second woman to hold that position.

BCA Junior National 9-Ball Championships turns 11

The BCA and the Billiard Educational Foundation have announced preparations for the 11th annual 1999 BCA Junior National 9-Ball Championships, an event for young cueists. This year's local junior talent is now able to qualify through local BCA-sanctioned Junior Leagues as well as the many upcoming local qualifying events.

The host site for the 1999 event will be Magoo's Billiards located in Tulsa, Okla., and event dates will be July 22-24. All play will be on Magoo's 9-foot Brunswick Gold Crown III tables covered with Simonis 860 cloth.

Last year's tournament saw over 100 of the best young competitors from around the United States and Canada compete for $18,000 in scholarships in addition to over $72,000 in merchandise donated by BCA business members.

Each of the three 1999 division winners, including 18 and under girls, 18 and under open, and 14 and under open, will be eligible to represent the United States at the World Pool-Billiard Association (WPA) World 9-Ball Championships in 2000.

According to the BCA, qualifying for the 1999 BCA Junior Nationals requires winning any one qualifying tournament or being recommended by a BCA Junior League operator and completing at least six weeks of play in a local BCA-sanctioned Junior League. All participants must be currently enrolled in school and performing at or above their individual ability level.

For more information, contact the BCA (319)351-2112; Web site (www.bca-pool.com/tournamnets/juniors).

OCMA elects new officers

Rodney Stebelton (l) passes the gavel to newly elected OCMA president Phillip N. Elum.

The OCMA board of directors are, seated (l to r): Sean Richards, Rodney Stebelton, Phillip Elum, Larry Van Brackel, and Dan Harder. Standing (l-r): Ryck Zarick, Michael Zappa, James Comella, Kerry Shaffer, and John Rizek. Absent from the photo are Dean DiCarlo, Dewey Laughlin, and William Westerhaus.

In accordance with the Ohio Coin Machine Association's code of regulations, the board of directors elected officers for 1998-1999. In the "passing of the gavel" ceremony, Phillip N. Elum of Elum Music Co. in Massillon, Ohio, assumed the presidency of the OCMA.

Other officers installed at the same time included: William Westerhaus (Pioneer Service, Cincinnati), first vice president; Dan C. Harder (Shaffer Services, Columbus), second vice president; Larry A. Van Brackel (A. Van Brackel & Sons, Defiance), treasurer; Ryck Zarick (All Star Vending, Toledo), secretary; and Rodney L. Stebelton (Stebelton Music & Vending, Lancaster), board chairman.

For more information, contact the OCMA, (614)888-9772; fax (614)888-9767; Web site (www.the-ocma.org).

VNEA to host Speed Pool Tournament

The Valley National 8-Ball Association (VNEA) has formed a nationwide Speed Pool Tour event. The object of Speed Pool is to run a rack of 15 balls as fast as you can. The world record for this is 26.5 seconds held by England's Dave Pearson.

The VNEA expects many of its charter holders to conduct local Speed Pool qualifiers for their players. Each qualifier will produce a champion who will be invited to Las Vegas, Nev., for the 1999 VNEA World Speed Pool Tour Finals and a chance to win $5,000 and the title of World Champion. Additional finishers will receive merchandise from the many pool-related sponsors of the tour: Cuesport, Falcon Cues, Paul Huebler Cues, Pearson Promotions, Predator Cues, Valley, and Viking. The event will run in conjunction with the 19th Annual VNEA International Championships held May 27-June 5, 1999.

For more information, contact the VNEA, (800)544-1346; fax (517)893-0103.

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Motorola and Aureal announce alliance

Motorola Internet and Networking Group and Aureal Semiconductor have announced a strategic alliance to develop and market a series of enhanced communication solutions to the PC marketplace combining Motorola's soft modem technology with Aureal's Vortex 3D audio accelerators and A3D positional audio algorithms.

By sharing their expertise and strengths in the fields of communications and audio, the companies will offer affordable, upgradable, and easy-to-use products that would not have been conceived without the benefit of a collaborative business model. This union benefits everyone from audiophiles and cutting-edge game players, to business users and the average consumer alike.

The first of a series of products to be announced is an Aureal modem/audio combo card that integrates Aureal's Vortex audio chip with Motorola's SM 56 modem software. The solution combines a full-featured V.90 data/fax/voice modem (with auto-fallback to K56flex for backward compatibility) with Aureal's A3D positional audio technology and the Vortex 8820 digital PCI audio accelerator.

The combined technology from Aureal and Motorola will be integrated in code that provides high connect rates, sustained data throughput, and increased resiliency to line noise, while maintaining high concurrency of multimedia operations.

The cost-savings of an integrated 3D audio/modem card are expected to be significantly lower than the combined pricing for separate products and will also save users and/or vendors an additional PCI slot.

Future collaborations from Motorola and Aureal will be products based on Intel's upcoming audio modem riser (AMR) format for desktop systems and the Mobile Daughter Card (MDC) for portable configurations. Further details on both company's products and technologies may be found at http:// www.mot.com/ing and http://www.aureal.com.

Kodak launches ScreenCheck and sticker print kiosks

Kodak officially launched its ScreenCheck Experience at the ShowEast '98 conference. The program is designed to help exhibitors optimize image quality on their motion picture screens and raise the quality of the total motion picture presentation.

"We are partnering with exhibitors to ensure that audiences experience films the way they are meant to be seen," says Sean Lohan, director of business development, theatrical distribution, Kodak's Professional Motion Imaging division.

Kodak will work with theaters to bring projection quality on theatrical screens to optimum levels. The company will also provide advertising and marketing materials that identify the certified screens that satisfy ScreenCheck standards.

Don Lane, a 15-year veteran of AMC Theaters, has joined Eastman Kodak Company to oversee the ScreenCheck Experience.

Kodak announced plans to develop and test the ScreenCheck program last March at the ShoWest conference in Las Vegas.

In additional Kodak news, Kodak showcased two "Wizard of Oz" standee displays housing sticker prints kiosks at the ShowEast '98. The kiosks are loaded with a selection of customized image content from the classic 1939 movie which has been restored and is scheduled for re-release by Warner Bros.

Moviegoers can step into a kiosk, select the background they like, and preview a picture on a monitor composited with the content they choose. The Oz-themed kiosks include images of the Emerald City and a number of the Oz characters.

In addition to cinema lobbies and malls, Kodak has installed sticker prints kiosks and other digital imaging products in amusement and theme parks, a number of retail outlets including studio stores, and other leisure-based entertainment locations.

For additional information, contact Kodak, (909)481-2440; Web site (www.kodak.com/go/motion).

Full Court Slam dunks in

At the IAAPA trade show in Dallas last month, Vivid Group Inc. unveiled its Full Court Slam, a full-body virtual reality simulator that puts a player's live video image on the court and into the game. Full Court Slam is a full-court one-on-one challenge against a computer-generated opponent and is the latest in the company's series of patented Gesture Extreme (GX) products.

Video gesture control technology allows the participant intricate manipulation of the virtual basketball. Stepping in front of the video monitor/camera set up, a participant's live image is instantly transported onto the screen onto a 3D-basketball court. For more information, contact Vivid Group, (416)340-9290; fax(416)348-9809; Web site (www.vividgroup.com).

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Golden Age Pioneer awards presented

A new organization, the International Registry of Historic Video Game and Pinball Arcades, presented its first Golden Age Pioneer awards during a banquet at the 1998 Pinball Expo in Chicago, Ill.

The Registry was founded by the Twin Galaxies Intergalactic Scoreboard as a repository for historical data on the arcade era. The first three award recipients were drawn from the time referred to as the "Golden Age of Video Game Arcades" (1980-1985).

Winning arcades and their managers are: Space Station Arcade in Anchorage, Alaska, (Pam Iverson); Friar Tuck's in Calumet City, Ill., (Tom Blankley); and The Launch Pad in Capitola, Calif., (Daniel "Yogi" Taylor).

Pinball Expo organizers Rob Berk and Mike Pacak turned the microphone over to Walter Day of Twin Galaxies for the presentations. Said Day, "The arcade is a cultural phenomenon that most people in our modern era have enjoyed at some time or other. And, many historians are beginning to agree that the arcade is emblematic of the computer literacy that has been transforming society since the early 1980s. Arcades enjoyed their biggest boom at that time, changing the social and cultural landscape for millions of children and adults."

Day remarked that the LBEs and FECs of today should pay tribute to neighborhood arcades, which he feels made a historic contribution to the popular culture of the late 20th century.

Walter Day (l), electronic game historian, presents the Twin Galaxies Golden Age Arcade Award to Tom Blankley of Friar Tuck's Game Room.

In accepting the award for Friar Tuck's, Tom Blankley stated, "This is a wonderful business. Friar's is a family owned and operated arcade where everybody not only knows your name but how well you play. Player recognition and competition is what has kept guests coming back for more than 16 years. The spirit of competition and constant development of better games and pins is the lifeblood of my business and our industry."

Day promises that arcades from other epochs in coin-op will be honored at upcoming trade shows. Nominations are requested from industry members. Day can be reached at (515)472-3882, or check out the Web site (www.twingalaxies.com).

Sega previews tournament pinball

Sega Pinball provided 10 *Godzilla* pinballs to test tournament play.

Pinball enthusiasts from around the world recently gathered in Rosemont, Ill., for the annual Pinball Expo. Sega Pinball Inc. provided 10 *Godzilla* pinballs to be used for the "Flip Out" tournament.

In addition, Sega Pinball previewed its new *Kelly Packard's Golden Cue Tournament Edition* pinball in a separate mini tournament format, which was held on five machines. The purpose was to evaluate the new tournament scoring systems and rules. The goal of the new rules is to keep the scores close and to allow players to achieve them faster. The game can also be played as traditional pinball. The lines to play this new pinball, according to Sega Pinball, were long in anticipation of trying out this new concept. The winner, Kenji Ishii, won a TV/VCR.

Gary Stern, president of Sega Pinball, said, "The tournament edition pinball is set up so that an average player can play against a good player and still be competitive on what is a game of skill. The rules and scoring system worked perfectly, so we know we are on the right track."

Look for Sega Pinball Tournament Edition pinball at your local distributor in early 1999. For more information, contact Sega Pinball, (708)345-7700; fax (708)345-7813.

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Background photo: Harrah's Joliet Casino

Triton Systems opens new market for ATMs

Triton Systems Inc. announced the introduction of the Mako cash dispenser, a feature-rich new cash-dispensing automated teller machine (ATM) for retailers and distributors. According to Triton Systems president Dr. Ernest Burdette, Mako provides the lowest cost of ownership available in the ATM market today–in terms of both initial investment and ongoing maintenance–making ATMs feasible for lower volume retail locations. Triton unveiled the innovative ATM, which will be available in the first quarter of 1999, at the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS) 1998 Convention & Exposition.

Mako is designed to provide convenience store owners, restaurants, gas stations and hotel operators with a profitable, cost-effective ATM solution in locations where daily foot traffic is relatively low (500 people or fewer).

"Triton shook up the market four years ago with the introduction of the first ATM based on dial-up transmission technology," said Dr. Burdette. "Today we've leveraged the success of the highly functional Triton 9600, which raised our installed base to over 20,000 ATMs since its introduction in 1997, to create the industry's most cost-effective ATM designed specifically for lower-volume retail locations."

Triton's stated goal is to continually enrich the functionality of its ATMs, while driving costs down. Mako offers a color monitor and capacity for displaying advertising screens. The ability to use Mako as an advertising medium gives businesses a means of reaching customers.

Mako is designed to reduce ongoing maintenance costs, including streamlining the cost of cash replenishment and capital. Every Mako ATM also has Triton Connect software functionality, which allows owners to access and control ATMs from a centralized location. By utilizing Triton Connect, Mako will leverage the wealth of applications available on the popular 9600, according to Dr. Burdette.

"Once again, we're raising the bar for what retailers and distributors have come to expect from Triton in terms of the price-performance ratio," he said. "The value proposition for Mako is that retailers in lower-traffic locations save money and make money."

Triton System's new, low-cost Mako ATM.

For more information, contact Triton Systems, (800)367-7191; Web site (www.tritonsystemsinc.com).

Capcom to release *Resident Evil 2* to PC Gamers

Capcom has announced plans to bring *Resident Evil 2*, one of the best-selling PlayStation titles of 1998, to the PC market in February 1999. The title, which has sold more than 4.5 million units worldwide since its release for the PlayStation in January of this year, is the next chapter in the unparalleled series that defined the survival horror genre.

In *Resident Evil 2*, Raccoon City continues to endure an onslaught of horror and fear as mysterious, flesh-eating chemicals spread into town and turn everyone it touches into zombies. Optimized for the PC, this new version will support advanced 3D graphics accelerators from Rendition and 3Dfx Interactive among others.

Resident Evil 2 features computer rendered graphic introduction and ending sequences using motion capture technology. Enhancements include greater detailed graphics, heightened interaction with the game environment, more mutant beasts, an arsenal of new and quicker weapons, and more mind boggling puzzles and tricks. Unlike the PlayStation version, the PC version allows players to enjoy the "hidden mini-games" known as Extreme Battle, Tofu, and 4th Survivor, from the beginning of the game.

☛ **Struve Distributing Co.** Inc. of Salt Lake City, Utah, recently launched its own Web site. You can visit them at (www.struve.com).

☛ **Coryphaeus Software Inc.** has changed its corporate name to Centric Software Inc. All business operations remain the same, including office locations and phone numbers. Chris Groves, president and CEO, commenting on the change, said, "Centric Software better describes our expanded vision of providing Collaborative Virtual Prototyping solutions on a range of platforms." For more information, contact Centric Software, (408)395-4537; Web site (www.centricsoftware.com).

☛ **William T. Glasgow Inc.** has announced the relocation of its offices from South Holland, Ill., to 10729 W. 163rd Place, Orlando Park, Ill. 60467. Phone (708)226-1300; fax (708)226-1310.

☛ **Andreu International Corp.** has a new address. They now can be reached at 1390 South Dixie Highway, Suite 1308, Miami, Fla. 33146; (305)665-4549; fax (305)665-6599.

☛ **NEC Systems** unveiled a new Web service and software offering at COMDEX/Fall 98 in Las Vegas last month. The company showed its Auraline Multimedia Service, Greeting Card Service, and Multimedia Creation Kit CD-ROM versions 1.6. For more details, check the NEC Systems Web site (www.auraline.com).

☛ **Channing Hayden**, "Management" columnist for *Play Meter*, is also a novelist and author of numerous short stories set in New Orleans. He has established a Web site for New Orleans stories penned by local writers (www.neworleansstories.com). Books can be downloaded instantly from the Internet. ▲

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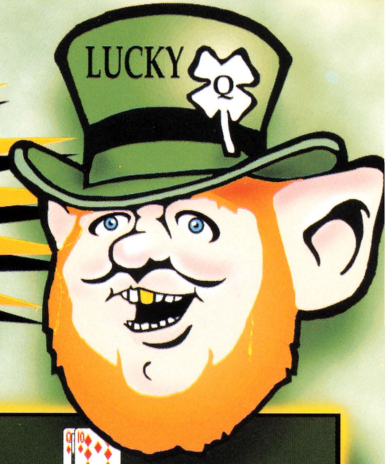

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Pop 'n Win Bingo

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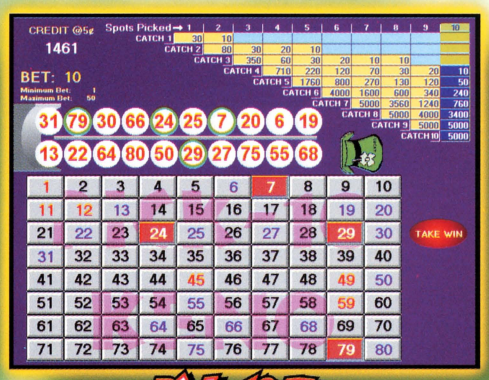

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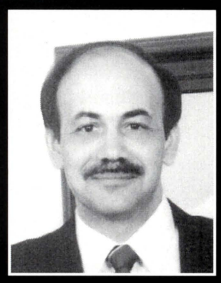
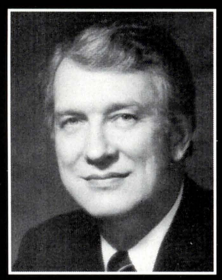
Brain Carasik (r) and Howard Cohen.

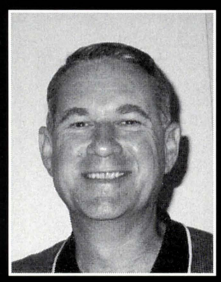
Who's NEWS



Richard Geerdes



James Rost



Dennis Sable

Linda Komorsky

Sylvie St.-Hilaire

Jeffrey Sheiber

Kiddie Rides USA (KRUSA) has named **Brian Carasik** as senior project coordinator and director of licensing. In addition, the company has added a new sales representative, **Howard Cohen**, who will be based in the company's Denver, Colo., headquarters. The announcement was made at the recent Fun Expo by Stuart Heller, KRUSA president. Carasik and Cohen can be reached at (800)448-6888 or (303)399-7191; fax (303)399-8144.

The National Automatic Merchandising Association has named **Richard Geerdes** to succeed **James Rost** as president and CEO of the association when Rost retires at the end of the year.

NAMA chairman G. Michael Cronk said, "Jim Rost has served the industry wisely and well in his 11 years at the helm of NAMA. His leadership will be missed. We look for Rich to continue the progress made under Jim. Rich's background in the industry and his nearly 11 years with NAMA should stand him in good stead as our industry enters a period of great opportunity and challenge."

Rost has served on the NAMA board of directors since 1980 and held leading positions in the industry since the early 1960s. Geerdes joined NAMA after a series of vending and foodservice management positions with Interstate United and Canteen Corp. He can be reached at (312)346-0370; fax (312)704-4140.

Motion platform and game designer company Stricor has named **Dennis Sable** as director of sales. His responsibilities include West Coast and international sales, as well as providing an interface to the U.S. distribution network.

Sable's career has included positions as arcade manager of United Artists Theatre Amusements, instructor for Randy Fromm's Arcade Schools, route technician, senior technician for a national arcade chain, technical writer for manufacturing firms, and sales representative for companies such as Leland, Capcom, and GreyStone.

Brad Crosby, vice president of sales for Stricor, commented, "We're pleased to have Dennis on our team. His knowledge of the industry has already had a positive affect on our sales and marketing efforts. Sable can be reached at (619)676-0695; e-mail (dsable@stricor.com).

TouchTunes Digital Jukebox has named **Linda Komorsky** as vice president of business affairs, music rights, and licensing and **Sylvie St.-Hilaire** as director of copyright.

Komorsky has 25 years of experience in the music industry, where she has held several senior positions with diverse responsibilities at national and international levels, including as vice president of international acquisitions and marketing at BMG Music Publishing. Komorsky has been instrumental in TouchTunes' success in obtaining record company and music publishing rights. Her ongoing efforts will continue to help TouchTunes increase the database of hit songs in the TouchTunes music library. Komorsky is based in Los Angeles, Calif.

Sylvie St.-Hilaire has 15 years of experience in the jukebox business. Her responsibilities include compiling available hits for the many TouchTunes operator-partners. Since there are many different types of musical venues, St.-Hilaire has created seven separate hard drives so operators can tailor the music to the location. Her jukebox career began at Nadisq, a division of Laniel Canada. She later became director of customer service for the international one-stop. St.-Hilaire is based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

To reach Komorsky or St.-Hilaire, call (888)338-5853 (outside the United States (847)419-3300); fax (847)419-3304.

Jeffrey Sheiber will direct a new Orlando-Fla.-based central Florida sales and

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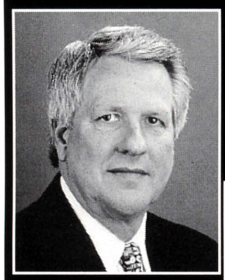
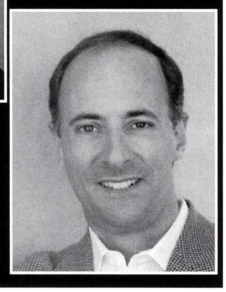


Paul Scribner



Mike Kent

Who's NEWS

marketing division for Cost of Wisconsin, the 40-year-old firm that specializes in the design and construction of miniature golf courses, zoological exhibits, aquariums, museums, and other attractions.

Sheiber has seven years of experience in the sports and entertainment industry, having been with both Bankshot Basketball and The Washington Bullets. As Southeast sales manager, he will cover North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Florida, as well as South America and the Caribbean.

Cost has established a manufacturing plant in Okahumpka, Fla., and is currently working on projects for Universal Studios Florida, Bass Pro Shops, and various miniature golf facilities. Scheiber can be reached at (800)778-0071. The company's northern plant and corporate headquarters is in Germantown, Wis., (800)221-7625.

Paul Scribner has joined Atlus Dream Entertainment (ADE) as senior vice president of sales and marketing. He will oversee all sales and marketing, including development and implementation of promotions, advertising, publicity, special events, licensing, partner marketing, and related products.

ADE partners with operators and venue owners to create marketing and promotion programs that generate traffic and profits. Said Scribner, "I am very excited to be a part of such a well-managed organization that is aggressively pursuing growth through relationships, marketing, and service programs that will increase profits for our partners."

Scribner was formerly president of Scribner Enterprises and served as a consultant to several leading corporations in the game and vending industries such as Sega Enterprises, Sega GameWorks, QuickSilver, and Planet Earth Entertainment. He can be reached at (949)753-7883; fax (949)753-0350.

Kodak's entertainment imaging division has named **Mike Kent** as worldwide general manager for themed entertainment. He will report to Joerg D. Agin, president of entertainment imaging and senior vice president of Eastman Kodak Co.

Kent will guide a business unit that creates and delivers unique pictures at entertainment venues such as theme parks, tourist attractions, sports arenas, cinemas, themed restaurants, and specialty stores. He was formerly vice president of advertising and promotions for Six Flags Theme Parks under the banner of Time Warner Entertainment Co. He was also with Nabisco Foods for 11 years. Kent is based in Los Angeles, Calif., (888)265-6981. ▲

The BEANIE Zone

Looking for an extremely well made, well priced Skill Crane? You'll find it in "The Beanie Zone." 24"w x 24"d x 72"h. Specially designed, attractive, galvanealled steel cabinetry with attraction lighting, special Beanie claw, and great sound effects.

"The Beanie Zone" features a rear chute to discourage forward tilt cheating, easy loading front window, prize counter, separate 8-way joystick and drop claw controls, dual coin mechanism with inside cash box, and bill validator with stacker.

The high security recessed T-Handle lower service door permits plenty of storage space inside. Controlled by a single mother board with no fuses or potentiometers, the game is completely state-of-the-art with seven owner programmable features.

Backed by years of high-quality skill crane manufacturing experience, "The Beanie Zone" will provide years of profits.

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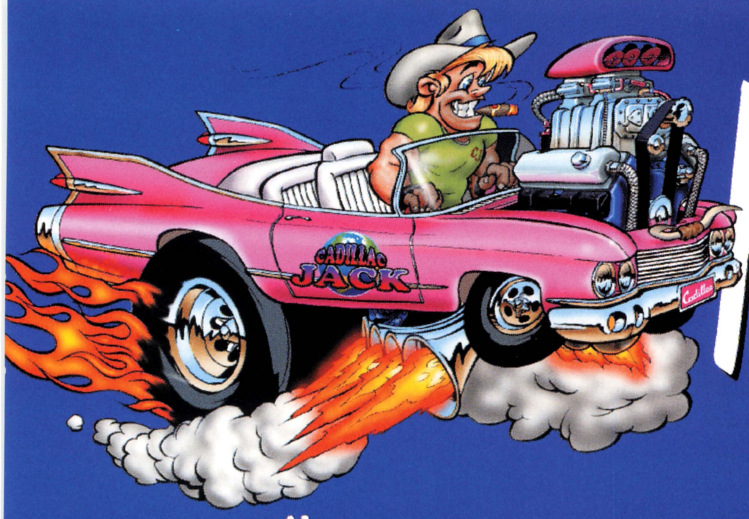

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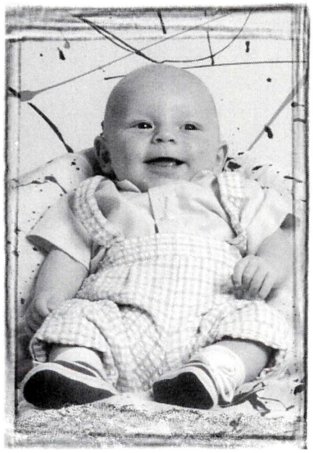
At the Brady Distributing open house in Orlando, (l-r): Bill Anderson (retired from Rowe International), Josie Anderson, and their son Keith Anderson, parts manager for Brady Distributing.

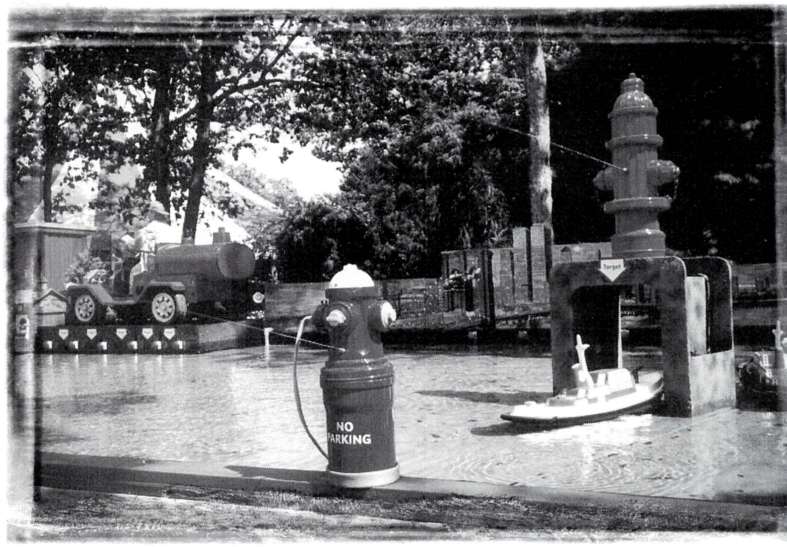
Burdette Bremer (l) of Castle Golf accepts a Golden Token Award for Best Exhibit of 3,000 square feet or less from incoming IAFEC president Phil DeAngelo.



Little Scott Jeffrey Blair is all smiles as he comes up to his first Christmas. Born May 3, he is the pride and joy of his parents, Jeff Blair of Entropy USA and his wife Debbie.

Pete Walton (l) of Plus Sales and **Keith Arnold** of Professional Amusement Systems also attended the Brady Distributing open house in Orlando, Fla. Product on display included the Plush Bus crane from ICE.

Outgoing IAFEC president Harold Skripsky (r) of EMS Inc. presented a plaque to Ed Pearson of Sports Plus as Ed's term on the association board came to an end. Ed preceded Harold as IAFEC president.



Millennium Amusement Group's remote-controlled boats and interactive water squirting targets provided lots of fun at Six Flags Great Adventure. Features included *Fireman Fred*, who squirted water back at players and delivered humorous messages, as well as three fire hydrants that also sprayed water at guests. Millennium added an action wall to the site, a backdrop of New York City equipped with helicopters, airplanes, and sound effects. Players activated the targets, which moved up and down.

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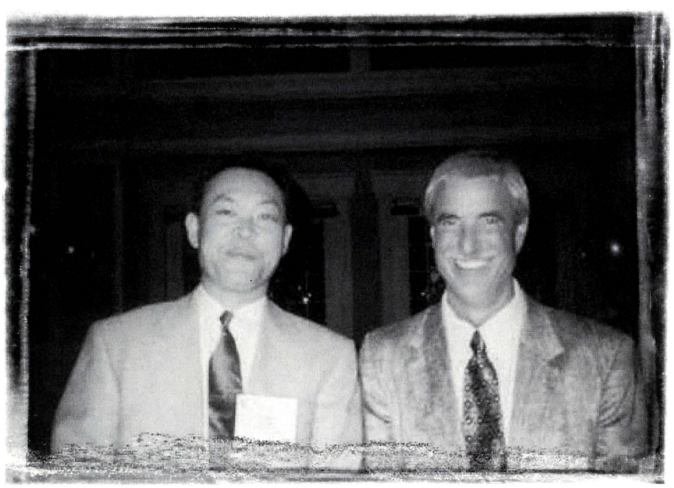
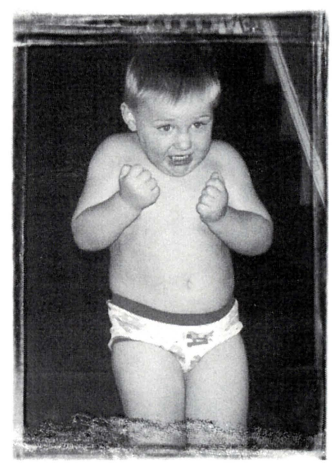
The Silent Auction at Fun Expo always garners attention. Attendees had an opportunity to obtain items donated by some 70 companies at a fraction of their retail costs. A sample of the games on the auction block were Interactive Light's *Kick It Jr.* and Seidel's *Goin' Rollin'.* Silent Auction chairman Frank Seninsky of Alpha-Omega Amusements thanked everyone who participated and explained that the contributions help support IAFEC in its work to bring information and products to its members so they can prosper in their businesses.

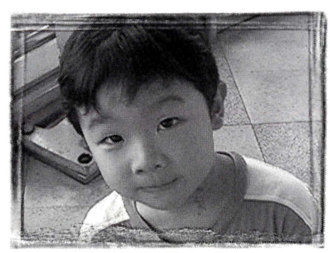


Tosh Morita of Fillmore Co. in Osaka, Japan, is a familiar face at industry trade shows. The dedicated photographer sent some photos from AMOA's 50th Anniversary Expo, including this one of himself (l) and Bill Beckham of Red Baron Amusements.

Raleigh Rossow of Brady Distributing in Charlotte, N.C., and his wife are proud of their children, Ben and Maggie. Ben is three years and eight months, while Maggie is 19 months old. Contrary to the stories of sibling rivalry that the Rossows have heard about, Ben and Maggie can hardly stand to be apart. Little Maggie even sits with Ben if he has to be in the "time out" corner.

Chris Vecchione of State Sales in Bensalem, Pa., sent in this picture of his son, Chris Jr., saying the little boy "was very upset over his likeness to the *CarnEvil* baby."





Back home in Japan, Tosh Morita was also busy with his camera, capturing his children (and future game players) on film: Masafumi (l) and Megumi. ▲

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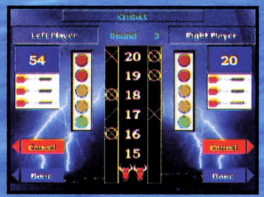
Two Dart Games

The Black Widow when played in the "split-screen" mode, is the full functional equivalent of two Galaxy games. Each side functions independently and offers all of the games and features of the Galaxy plus more.

Simultaneous Play (Head-to-Head) (Left vs. Right)

Traditional Games are more fun:

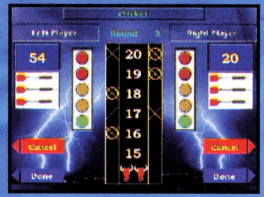


Cricket-pile on points before your opponent closes the number.

Tic-Tac-Darts-close the number before your opponent.

New Games for new fun:

Quick Draw-when the randomly selected number pops up, be the first one to score and steal your opponent's darts.

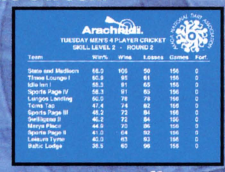


Quicket-Cricket with a twist. Hit the magic number first and steal your opponent's darts.

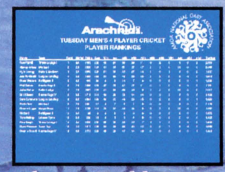
Easier League Play

Enhanced two-way communications upload league matches, standings, and schedules. The games will be ready and waiting for the league players with no need for player cards. League fees are collected by the bill acceptor and reflected in the accounting on the screen.

League Schedules



League Standings



Player Ranking

Enhanced Dual Communications

In addition to the above, software enhancements and advertisements can be distributed with equal ease. For machines without a modem, completely automatic updating can be accomplished during collection with an industry-standard Jaz drive.

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Megatouch XL6000

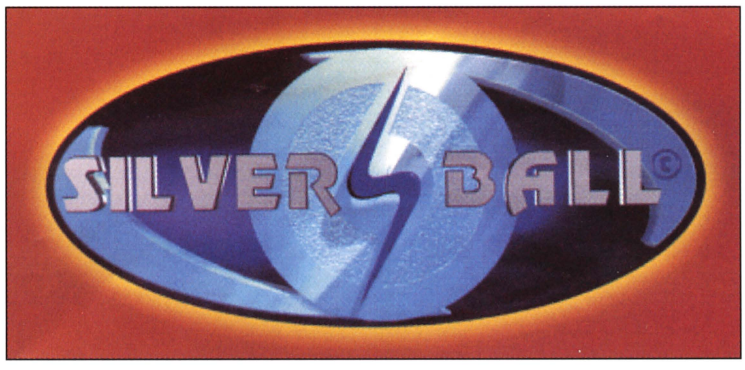
Merit Industries, Inc. has recently released its newest *XL* game, *Megatouch XL 6000.* The *XL 6000* has been updated with many new features to enhance performance and increase earnings. The new *Megatouch XL 6000* comes equipped with high-resolution graphics for enhanced photo quality, upgraded Wells-Gardner monitor, and a new interface system, designed with the player in mind. Players can now browse through the menu system for specific game information, costs, and a newly expanded Top 10 high scores list, before making their selection. It also contains over 60 different game versions, four completely new games including Hooter, Brick Breaker, Tennis Ace, Trip-Flip, and a new library of photo and trivia content.

The *XL 6000* is available in countertop and upright cabinets with a complete one-year warranty, three years on the touchscreen. As an added benefit, CD-ROM upgrade kits are now available. Mega Link is also included and allows for multigame interactive play, where players can challenge one another to head-to-head competition.

Also, Merit's *Megatouch 6* offers brand new games such as Trip-Flip, Take 2 and Sum Fun. It also contains new trivia content, including 10,000 new questions in Trivia Whiz and 7,500 new puzzles in Phraze Craze. The *Megatouch 6* kit provides upgraded content to *Megatouch I, II, III, IV, Super IV*, and *V* games.

For more information or distributor referral, contact Merit Industries, (800)639-4700; fax(215)639-5346; Web site (www.meritind.com).

Silver Ball



Bulova Technologies, L.L.C. has introduced *Silver Ball*, a tavern game system available in countertop or upright models. Units come in a handsome royal blue and black color scheme with a stylish futuristic design. *Silver Ball* features 40 card, word strategy, quiz, picture, and trivia games with true head-to-head competition.

Other features include easy updating and frequently released new games, state-of-the-art VGA graphics with Pentium processor, sealed hard drive, full-motion video capability, digital stereo sound, 20-inch Microtouch touchscreen, programmable adult entertainment option, three difficulty levels on all games, huge photo library, operator adjustable game play and pricing, multilanguage capability, and operator programmable pricing. Additional options include a communications link, a ticket dispenser, a bill acceptor, and token payout.

For more information, contact Bulova, (602)431-1096; fax (602)470-2072.

Card Master

Technik Manufacturing, Inc., Columbus, Neb., has announced the newest addition to its Card Master Pre-Paid Phone Card dispensing machine series. The Card Master-1 is a compact, one-row pre-paid phone card-dispensing machine designed for businesses that would like the convenience of dispensing cards through a vending machine yet have limited space. With dimensions of 15-5/8"H x 11"W x 7-1/2"D, the Card Master-1 offers many of the same features of the two, four, and eight row dispensing machines including resettable and nonresettable accounting meters, back lit LCD credit display, and tubular security locks. It available in black or red cabinets. The Card Master-1 will hold approximately 200, 30 ml cards.

A high-security model will also be available. This model will be of interest to those who would like to vend products in high-risk areas and need a secure, dependable machine.

For more information on the Card Master-1, contact Technik's sales department, (888)-Technik; fax (402)564-0406.

PostCard Express

eMedia Communications' *PostCard Express* machine offers a convenient way for people to create and send e-mail postcards called eCards which are personalized. They contain the senders' pictures, their recorded sound messages, and their written messages as well.

Each eCard promotes your attraction by containing a specific message promoting the venue. *PostCard Express* works well in museums, zoos, resorts, tourist attractions, amusement parks, and shopping malls. According to eMedia Communications, the benefits to the venue are numerous, including: incremental income through a revenue sharing program, educational and direct marketing opportunities, added value for guests, and small space requirements.

eCommunications also offers eDirect, a database direct marketing service combining the Internet, e-mail, and multimedia technology with a traditional direct marketing approach. eDirect has two components. The first is the product itself—an eCard. eCards are multimedia e-mail postcards that contain sound, text, and an image.

The second component of eDirect is the "hot" lists that are used. A hot list is one in which the recipient is either self-selected or referred. eMedia obtains its lists from many sources, including its *PostCard Express* machines that are located throughout North America and the Caribbean. eMedia also offers programs to gather e-mail addresses for its clients where the customer actively chooses to be included.

For more information, contact eMedia Communications, (888)686-6606; fax(773)463-9903; e-mail (sales@emediacommunications.net).

Carnival bingo machine

CYE Company Ltd. introduces *Carnival*, its LED bingo machine. This colorful game comes in an ABS cabinet. The front of the cabinet is decorated in carnival imagery, including a picture of a carnival participant wearing a feather and bead mask and surrounded by confetti and streamers. For more information, contact CYE Company Ltd., 886-6-2742686-9; fax, 886-6-2347077; e-mail (service@changyu.com).

Soccermax B100

Soccer Kicking Cages of America, Inc. will be introducing its soccer kicking cages for commercial use at upcoming trade shows. The *Soccermax B100* comes with a soccer delivery machine that delivers soccer balls at ground level to customers. Each *Soccermax B100* is provided with a Programmable Logic Center that has 12 settings for different ball release variations with an easy push button control panel. Soccer kicking cages are coin-operated and require less space than your average batting cage. There are soccer-related targets inside the cage for the player to kick at and audio messages that add to the fun. The *B100* can even be regulated to adjust soccer ball speeds for beginners to advanced players. The *Soccermax B100* requires no heavy-duty netting and no fenced gate for each cage, saving the operator on infrastructure costs.

For more information, contact Soccer Kicking Cages of America, Inc., (508)398-2121; fax (508)394-9642; Web site (www.soccermax.com).

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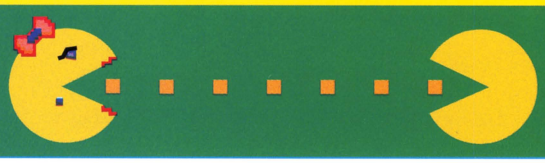

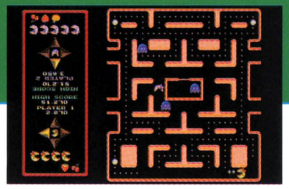

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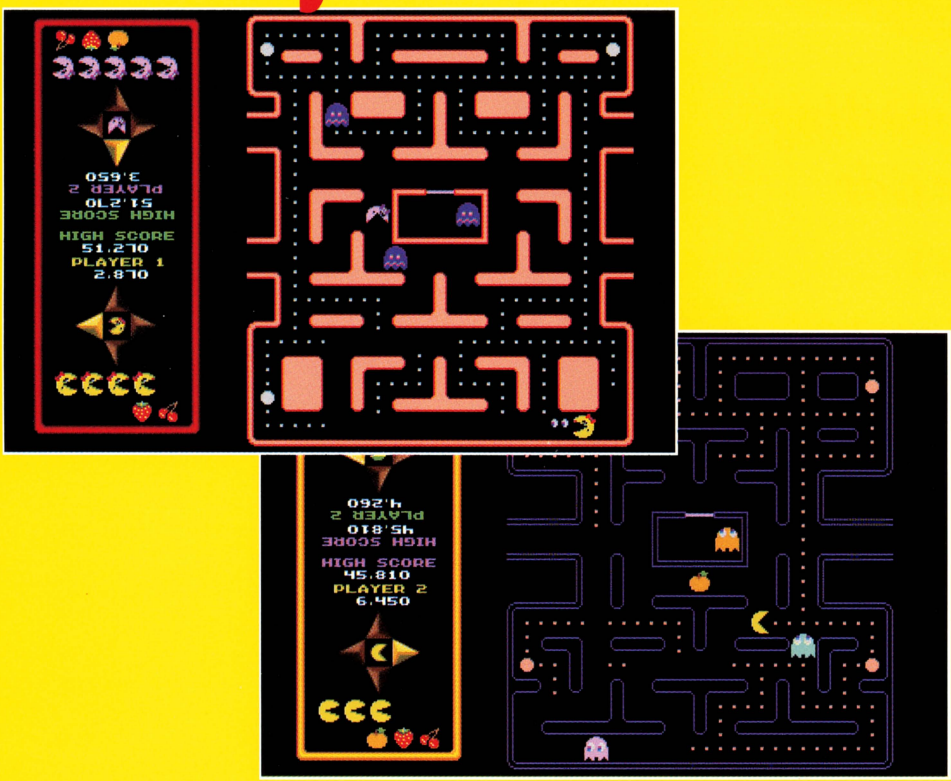

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WEB WATCH

***Play Meter* (www.playmeter.com)** presents Web Watch, highlighting some of the best coin-op industry Web sites each month.

Deith Distributing Inc. (www.deithdist.com)

Deith Distributing Inc.'s Web site lists extensive product offerings in the categories of video, pinball, redemption, and jukeboxes. Describing itself as "America's leading export distributor with more than three decades of experience and offering products from the major manufacturers in the amusement business," Deith Distributing has produced a well-organized, easy-to-use Web site. Its list of services includes sales, parts, technical support, shipping (both air and ocean), export documentation, and consulting on family entertainment centers.

Billiard Congress of America (www.bca-pool.com)

The Billiard Congress of America is the governing body for the sport of pocket billiards in North America. Its mission is to govern and/or promote competition and recreational participation in the sport by disseminating information on game rules, instruction, equipment specifications, and business operations. BCA's Web site is divided into the following subsections: news, staff, rules, links, membership, products, leagues, history, instruction, hall of fame, tournaments, tradeshow, publications, associations, marketplace, and e-mail. Its links section offers a wide variety of billiard related links well worth perusing.

Midway/Atari Games (www.midway.com)

Both Midway and Atari Games brands are featured at this site. This is a spectacularly visual site for both game players and coin-op business people. "The Midway and Atari brands have generated revolutionary, record-breaking games such as *Pong, Defender, Missile Command, Pac-Man, Centipede, NBA Jam, Cruis'n USA,* and *Mortal Kombat,*" announces the site. Many different game screen shots are offered for a multitude of games, as are specifications for distributors and operators. Other subsections of the Midway/Atari site include home games, company details, links, site search, magazine, fan club, and legal.

Oriental Trading Company (www.oriental.com)

OTC has organized its attractive site into compartments featuring a brief history of the company, products and services, customer service, FAQs, catalogs, hot news, links, and reply. Colorfully and entertainingly designed, the site offers many colorful and clear pictures of OTC's products from its catalog. Answered FAQs include "How can I get a catalog?" and "What are the methods of payment options?" Though the links section offers only one link, this is an attractive, accessible site for customers, old and new, of OTC.

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There has been a lot of talk about new technologies in our industry during the past several years.

One company on the leading edge of the technology revolution is TouchTunes.

More interesting than the technology is the new method of doing business being offered by this jukebox manufacturer.

VALERIE COGNEVICH

TouchTunes claims to offer partnerships to operators who choose to place its digital jukeboxes on the street. We were curious about this "partnership" deal, and thought our readers might want to know more as well. We talked with TouchTunes senior management and then talked with several operators to get their thoughts.

We began with some questions to Tony Mastronardi, president and CEO.

Play Meter: What exactly do you mean by partnership?

Tony: I first looked at the amusement business five years ago when I saw the prototype for the digital downloading jukebox. Subsequently, I attended trade shows and spoke with many operators. One thing I noticed was the adversarial relationship between operators and their suppliers.

Getting operators to buy new equipment was the main—sometimes only—goal of suppliers. The avoidance of purchasing new equipment seemed to be the objective of many operators. I decided then that when I was ready to bring our product to market, I would find a way to make certain that our company and operators would be on the same side. At TouchTunes we have developed a business plan that has our company teaming up with our customers. If they do well, we do well. We have an incentive to increase the venue's income.

Play Meter: Can you give us some details?

Tony: Of course. We offer a lease program where an operator shares in the weekly collection. The actual amount is based on the jukebox's gross revenue. The more the jukebox earns, the more TouchTunes makes. Naturally, this is a simplified explanation. There are minimums and maximums to our revenue sharing, as you would expect.

Play Meter: So it is in TouchTunes' best interest to help operators earn higher collections on their jukeboxes. Nice idea. How can you help?

Tony: The typical tavern customer is bombarded with advertising and images attempting to part him from his cash. How can we help our partners win this battle? We can work with the music industry to promote the music business and make the jukebox an exciting place to hear new releases. Also, if one of our programmers has an idea that would create more attractive client interfaces, we'll invest the time and money to do it because if we can increase collections by as little as $5 per week per jukebox, it is worth it. While most manufacturers make decisions based on lowering product cost whenever possible, we chose to have the Bose Corp. build our jukebox.

Believe me, there were many alternatives to Bose and all of them were cheaper! But no one compared on sound quality. If one out of 10 patrons chooses to play the jukebox one extra time during his visit to the tavern, we have helped our partner—the operator—and we have helped him help his other partner—the location owner. Now that is teamwork or partnership.

Play Meter: How did you come up with the partnership concept?

Tony: That is a funny story. Our vice president of sales and

TOP:
TouchTunes gets the music! From left: Judy Castano (senior legal assistant/Manatt, Phelps & Phillips), Lee Reed (manager of mechanical licensing/BMG Songs), Linda Komorsky (vice president of business affairs), Pam Springs (vice president of film and TV licensing/Sony-ATV), Joan Schulman (vice president of synchronization licensing/Polygram Music), and Ralph Mastronardi (regional sales manager).

BOTTOM:
Some of TouchTunes' technical whizzes, (l-r): Pierre Trudeau (vice president of research and development), Ken Philips (programmer analyst), Guy Nathan Sr. (vice president), and Dominique Dion (project leader).

marketing, John Margold, sent a letter to thousands of operators while he was at a previous company, a traditional CD jukebox manufacturer. He questioned the TouchTunes business plan and asked operators to consider, "Who really is your partner?" I read a copy of that letter and it hit me: Partnership is what our marketing concept is all about. John was actually helping TouchTunes six months before he joined the company!

After talking with Tony, we had some questions for other TouchTunes people, beginning with John Margold.

Play Meter: Tony told us that you inadvertently gave TouchTunes its marketing concept of partnership. How do you feel about that?

John: I didn't give TouchTunes the concept. The entire basis of the business plan was for TouchTunes and operators who placed TouchTunes jukeboxes on their routes to work together as a team—as partners. All I did was give Tony a one-word phrase that sums up the concept. Of course, at the time I was trying to poke holes in the TouchTunes plan.

I felt a bit like a carbon paper salesman when photocopier machines were first introduced. I was dancing as fast as I could, but I knew that I was facing an inevitable evolution of the coin-op phonograph. It was just a matter of time before digital downloading jukeboxes went from theory to reality.

Play Meter: With TouchTunes, the operator never owns the jukebox. How can this help an operator when he never builds equity?

John: There are two points that I'd like to make in answer to the equity question. First, what equity truly exists with a five-year-old jukebox, especially one of a previous technology? Look at the value of a 45 rpm jukebox five years after CD boxes hit the market. It is not a straight-line depreciation when new technology is introduced; the older product has its value drop off rapidly.

Secondly, since our partners don't have to come up with the cash to purchase a jukebox (or tie up their credit line on a long-term finance contract), the operator's cash or credit line is available to build equity with other products that will help build cash flow—countertops, pool tables, or other equipment that, frankly, has a faster payback than the jukebox. In my years in the jukebox business it's become obvious to me that the jukebox takes a good deal of time to pay off, usually between 18 months and three years, especially if you calculate the purchase of CDs and laser repairs.

So what is equity compared to cash flow? We offer our partners income without a cash investment. However, even though we don't think equity is a problem, we do address the issue in detail in our business model. When we sit down with a potential partner we can show him, using his own numbers, why his company's value (that is, equity) will increase as he places TouchTunes jukeboxes on his route.

Play Meter: Since there is no cash investment, you must get calls from locations and operator wanna-bees all the time. Have you set criteria?

John: Absolutely. We will only deal with established operators. And in each market we look for a partner with a good reputation as a service-oriented operation. Even though we supply all warranty parts at no cost to our partners for the life

John Margold, Guy Nathan, and Tony Mastronardi.

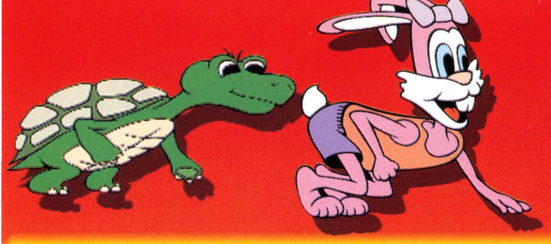
Did someone say "technician?" From left: Ed Schmidt (field service), Jon Bird (computers), Tim Pennington (field service), and Rich Hirshman (field service manager).

Part of the Buffalo Grove, Ill., team, (l-r): Karen Tobin, Cindy Emling, and Dorraine Roseman.

of the jukebox, we still rely on him. He runs street service, makes the collections, keeps a rapport with the location management, and determines what type of music will earn best in each establishment. We are quite selective. After all, we are providing a very expensive, high quality product at no charge, so we are justifiably choosy.

Play Meter: Lets talk about music. Do you help the operators who place your jukeboxes with their musical selections?

John: TouchTunes has hired two professionals from the music industry. Linda Komorsky has spent 25 years in the business—most recently as a vice president for BMG America. Linda has done a great job of securing the rights to a huge va-



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riety of music. And Sylvie St.-Hilaire works on getting the right mix for each type of location. Sylvie has spent 15 years in the one-stop business. Many operators have been dealing with Sylvie for years. It goes to the heart of our partnership concept—the more help we provide, the better the music selection, and there's more money in the cash box that comes back to the partnership.

The partnership concept makes sense in theory. But we wanted to hear the story behind the story from operators who have placed TouchTunes boxes in their locations. We called director of sales Dan McAllister to get the names of some TouchTunes partners. While on the phone with Dan, we had a few questions for him.

Play Meter: You have a sales department which includes regional sales people driving around in trucks demonstrating the jukebox. Wouldn't it have been easier to go through the traditional distribution network?

Dan: It may have been easier, but I doubt that it would be as effective. Many of our sales people have distribution experience. Frankly, most distributors do a good job of getting a known product into their market. But we are asking people to "think outside the box" and try something new. Naturally, it is easier to sell something that is already understood. Since distributors handle multiple product lines, it is most likely that they would put their emphasis on these known products. And there is also the cost factor. We have asked Bose to build the best jukebox they can build, and adding another level of marketing and the margins that they would need would make us less competitive.

Since our regional sales managers have only one product, they are able to put their full efforts into helping our partners. They will help an operator bring the jukebox to location, work on laying out the sound system, and even work on music selection. And the support staff back in Buffalo Grove, Ill., is first-rate with marketing support and customer service.

Play Meter: If you don't rely on local distribution, how do you handle service?

Dan: We have a great field service training staff. Before we deliver a partner's first jukebox, we insist that they allow their service people to be trained by TouchTunes. We have a service hotline that is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Partners who place five or more get a spare parts kit featuring a complete PC, hard drive and UPS, plus a touch screen monitor. This is over $2,000 worth of weekend peace-of-mind. Even partners who don't have these key components in stock have Fed Ex delivery by 10:30 a.m. the day after they call us.

Operator comments

Dan gave us several names and numbers of operators who have experience with the product. Here's what Joe Ferris (Ferris Music, Maine), Bill Witsen (U-Neek Enterprises, Pennsylvania), and Rod Kruse and Larry Witt (Nebraska Technical Services, Nebraska) had to say.

***Play Meter* to Joe Ferris:** Joe, you run a route that extends through much of Maine. You operate pool, music, countertops, darts, pinballs, and videos. You are obviously an experienced operator. Why make such a major change in the way you do business?

Joe: I always try to stay on top of new technology. As I educate myself, I try to weed out products that are not a good fit, and I try to incorporate the products that do make sense as quickly as possible. I do this to give me a competitive advantage in my market. The TouchTunes jukebox program fits in perfectly with the type of product I want on my route. Its product, with Bose sound, provides the best sounding jukebox in the market. It also alleviates the need for CD maintenance and

From left: Gilles Laframboise (customer support), Carlington Spence (music digitizer), and Sylvie St.-Hilaire (director of copyright).

The financial team, (l-r): Chris Marcolefas (director of finance), Normand Marier (accounting manager), Guy Rivard (vice president of finance and administration), and Maria Andromidas (administrative assistant).

TouchTunes' internationally famous sales force, nicknamed the men (and woman) in black, (l-r): Nikki Fujinaka, Ralph Mastronardi, Tom Hynes, Jim Kelly, Dan McAllister, Dan Clarton, John Margold, and Chuck West.

labor and as well as reducing mechanical maintenance and associated costs. The bonus is that although I take less out of each jukebox each week, I actually get to keep more on the bottom line because I have no up front product cost and no music or parts costs.

Play Meter: You have had TouchTunes jukeboxes in some of your locations since September. Can you tell us how it's affected your collections?

Joe: I have seen an average increase in my collections of 30 percent to 40 percent. I am pleasantly surprised that the collections are actually increasing with time and not leveling off. I attribute this to the fact the patrons are getting used to the product.

Play Meter: What has been the reaction of the location owners and customers?

Joe: Most of the locations had been waiting for it for a long time. Once they finally had the jukebox installed, the location owners were very excited. I actually had one of my locations call the local TV station to come and cover the "first" installation of the digitally downloading jukebox. The TV station came out and did a three-minute segment. This really helped the next night when the bar was full of people wanting to play the new jukebox. It goes without saying that the patrons love the box.

Play Meter: So has this allowed you to structure a better commission for Ferris Music?

Joe: Yes. Once a location sees and hears the jukebox for the first time we are able to be very creative with the location splits!

Play Meter: The TouchTunes people claim that their program is a partnership. Has this been your experience with them?

Joe: Partnership in this business is a very uncomfortable concept for most operators to swallow. It has been my experience that I deal with "partners" today, in my local distributors and finance companies. Most of these companies do not care about my service calls or whether my equipment is operating properly or not. They certainly do not care if I am losing money with equipment I bought through them. So far TouchTunes has done a very good job in servicing my needs and helping me when I have a problem. They have a vested interest in their equipment operating properly and earning money. This being said, they have been a good partner so far.

Joe asked if he could make one additional comment after he finished answering our questions. He said that he has been hammered by distributors that say, "Joe, you're going to pay $17,000+ for that jukebox over five years." Joe responded, "Yes, but I generate $60,000 from my jukeboxes and I get to keep between eight and 10 percent of that after product cost and maintenance and CD costs. So, I'm actually making more money with TouchTunes!

***Play Meter* to Bill Witsen:** You are already a successful music operator. Why look to make this change from CD jukeboxes to digital?

Bill: I got involved with TouchTunes because I wanted to reduce my costs and the amount of work and effort I put into my jukebox route. I looked at what it took to operate a good music route; I had a tremendous amount of cost. When I looked at my average gross income per box ($80 per week), minus the associated costs ($30,000 CD library, plus new music, $5,000 cost of a jukebox, maintenance, parts, player repairs, and labor costs), I felt like I was working for nothing. With TouchTunes I am able to fix my costs and provide my customers with an exciting, cutting-edge product. This gives me a competitive edge with my existing customers and with new accounts.

Play Meter: Since you were one of the first operators in the country to place production model jukeboxes in your locations, how did TouchTunes respond to any problems?

Bill: TouchTunes responded better than I had expected. They had spare parts available to us immediately and their technical staff was prepared and efficient.

Play Meter: What about the location reaction?

Bill: Yes, I have felt like they care as much as we do. Regarding the locations' reactions to the jukeboxes, our locations, both owners and patrons, are extremely excited about the jukebox. In one of my locations the owner was able to reduce the amount of time he had a DJ working because of the sound quality and selection. The key factor is what is in the cash box. So far, we have seen an increase between 35 percent and 45 percent.

***Play Meter* to Rod Kruse and Larry Witt:** What was it about the experience of being one of TouchTunes test operators in 1997 that made you decide to place TouchTunes jukeboxes on your route?

Larry: We had very few technical problems, and we like the idea of not buying CDs. Also, we like new concepts—it is definitely the future of the jukebox.

Rod: When we did need back-up support from TouchTunes we got everything we needed.

Play Meter: Does the need for telephone lines concern you?

Rod: Not at all. We have darts, pay phones, and *Golden Tee Golf* on line.

Play Meter: Do you find it easier to manage music when you don't have to purchase, stock, and deliver CDs?

Larry: Ask our music guy, Ryan Kruse.

Ryan: *(laughing)* This eliminates a lot of work. Buying CDs and typing title pages is almost a full-time job—I have plenty of other full-time jobs around here!

Play Meter: Have your customers put more money in the jukebox when you replaced your traditional box with the TouchTunes Digital Jukebox?

Rod: Absolutely! A minimum of 50 percent at first. We think it will settle at 30 percent. One location did $80 a week with a CD box. The TouchTunes box has been doing $180 per week—which is actually better than 50 percent.

Play Meter: TouchTunes calls its marketing plan a partnership. Is that how you see it?

Larry: Yes, I'd say so. We take new jukeboxes from TouchTunes at no up-front cost and move the CD boxes we own down along the route.

In conclusion, it seems as though partnership is much more than a marketing catch phrase. The TouchTunes people have made believers out of many experienced operators. ▲

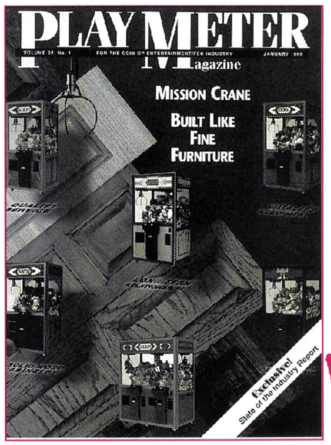
Turning Back the Hands of Time

A Look Back At 1998's Trade Shows

JANUARY

Theme

State of the Industry Report: Operators found out they were not alone. That dip in revenue they experienced was felt across the board in most equipment categories. *Play Meter* editor Valerie Cognevich called the drop in gross annual revenue "one unwelcome smack of sobering reality." Statistics published were averages based on numbers from a core group of operators with very diverse businesses.



Cover Story

Skill cranes with the look of fine furniture are the stock and trade of ***Mission Crane Service Inc.*** The company prides itself on precise engineering, fine craftsmanship, extensive field testing, on-site service, and an operator program that involves national accounts. Quality plush merchandise to stock those cranes is part of the program.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- A.G.E.'s *Toy Zone* (crane)
- Midway's *Off Road Challenge* and *NFL Blitz* (video)
- Fun Industries' *Fun-E-Ball* (prize vendor)
- N.E.T.'s *VideoNet* (Internet terminal)
- Atari's *San Francisco Rush: The Rock* (video)
- National Entertainment Tech.'s *Officer Owl* (capsule vendor)
- I.C.E.'s *Egg Venture* (video)
- Wurlitzer's *One More Time Princess* (jukebox)
- Intune's *Intune* (CD vendor)
- P & E's *Street Hoops* (novelty)
- Micro's *Global Touch HD* (countertop)
- American Photo Booth's *Sticker Station* (photo sticker booth)

HOT GAMES

Video Simulator: *Top Skater* (Sega)
Video Dedicated: *House of the Dead* (Sega)
Video Kit: *NFL Blitz* (Midway)
Pinball: *Medieval Madness* (Williams)
Classic Video: *Out Run* (Sega)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)
Alley Bowlers: *ICE Ball* (ICE)
Sports Games: *Full Court Frenzy* (ICE)
Single Cranes: *Rainbow* (Rainbow)
Children's Games: *Smart Toss Em* (Smart)
Roll Downs: *Spin To Win* (Lazer-Tron)
Novelty: *Cyclone* (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Water Game* (Bob's Space Racers)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)

Headline News

- IAAPA was awesome: 53 aisles and 31,500 visitors. Coin-op games and high-tech rides rubbed shoulders with vending machines and foodservice exhibits.
- AMOA, AAMA, IAFEC, and IAAPA adopted an educational program designed to help implement a parental advisory system for video game content.
- The Intel-sponsored Open Arcade Architecture Forum (OAAF) showcased several building blocks designed to aid implementation of a PC-based video game platform.
- President Clinton signed a law authorizing a new gold-colored dollar coin. Unfortunately, the paper dollar will remain.
- The Enchanted Castle Restaurant and Entertainment Complex of Lombard, Ill., was acquired by Ogden Entertainment, a subsidiary of Ogden Corp.
- The industry mourned the loss of A.M. "Red" Jones (pool legend), Angela Anderson (Mrs. Ken Anderson), Nathan Feinstein (World Wide Distributors), and Danny Jaleniewski (Keansburg, N.J.)

"Coin Quotes"

"I believe there will be a pinball machine 1,000 years from today because it has an advantage that no other game has—the ball is wild. In a video game you are challenging a group of programmers. With pinball you are in command."—Richard Bueschel.

"The average operator should get something out of this show (IAAPA), but not everything. It's time to look at other things. The key is constant add-ons. Challenge yourself, and keep on going."—Rich Holley

"Most of the unique and different product is coming from smaller, independent companies. That's what this industry needs: more interesting product to excite our guests."—Michael Getlan

FEBRUARY

Theme

Tax and Management was the focus with helpful information on these fronts: income forecasting, developing sound business plans, and a software update that looked at management software for today and tomorrow. In addition, an expanded "Tax Tips" section tackled everything from the year-end bonus trap to S corporation status.

Cover Story

Premier Data Corp. (PDC) officials summed up their philosophy in four words: expertise, endurance, quality, and accuracy. "We learn how operators do business," said marketing manager Al Gietl. "That is the only way we can advise them on the best product for their businesses." PDC assured that its software is year 2000 compliant.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Bob's Space Racers' *Red Planet, Central Vertical Water Game*, and *Speed Shifter* (novelty)
- Sega Pinball's *Starship Troopers* (pinball)
- CES' *Galaxy Games* (cocktail system)
- Williams' *Cirqus Voltaire* and *No Good Golfers!* (pinball)
- HanaHo Games' *Skillshot* (novelty)
- Dynamo *Interactive's Tidel ATM* (ATM)
- Bay Tek's *Toss-Up* and *Jump Shot* (alley bowler)
- Benchmark's *Claim Jumper* (novelty)
- Sammy USA's *Sports Arena* (prize vendor)
- Champion's *Lil' Champ* and *Champion Shot* (children's games)
- Electromatic International's *Treasure Touch Professional* (card games)
- Digital Vehicles' *Pacesetter 8000* (simulator)
- Smart's *Bear Claw* series (crane) and *Prize Circus* (prize vendor)
- Erwo Elektronika's *Magic Dart II* (darts)
- Capcom's *Rival Schools* (video)

HOT GAMES

Video Simulators: *Top Skater* (Sega)
Video Dedicated: *House of the Dead* (Sega)
Video Kits: *NFL Blitz* (Midway)
Pinballs: *Medieval Madness* (Williams)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)
Classic Videos: *Out Run* (Sega)
Alley Bowlers: *Basket Fever* (Bay Tek)
Sports Games: *Super Shot* (Skee-Ball)
Children's Games: *Shoot To Win! Jr.* (Smart)
Roll Downs: *Spin-To-Win* (Lazer-Tron)
Novelty: *Cyclone* (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Water Game* (Bob's Space Racers)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)

Headline News

- American Vending Sales opened a new branch office in Springfield, Ill.
- Atlas Distributing in Chicago, Ill., acquired Kentucky Coin in Louisville, Ky.
- Ted Lloyd, retired from Rowe International, passed away.
- Sega S.A. and the Service Games Group announced plans to launch Vega Universe: The Game Channel.
- The JLO announced jukebox license fees for the year, a 2.2 percent increase over the previous year based on the consumer price index.
- Valley Recreation set a new tournament format, Ernie's Tourney, which replaced the former Valley Gold.
- The IAFEC produced a family entertainment package to assist in site selection and business planning.
- Betson acquired the assets of two Mondial offices: Norwood, Mass., and Rochester, N.Y.

"Coin Quotes"

"Just because young people are playing a 'shooter' game does not mean they are going to go on a killing spree. But it does desensitize them to violence, and that is unfortunate."—Sen. Herbert Kohl

"Without standards in the form of overall company objectives, you can't decide if your business is on track."—Channing Hayden

"It wasn't until I started looking at the repercussions of whether income forecasting can still be used for video games that I found out how few operators are really using this method." —Don Hesch

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MARCH

Theme

ASI '98 was on the horizon in Las Vegas. On tap were educational sessions and Randy Fromm's Technical Olympics that always draw a crowd. A product preview indicated what 115 of the exhibitors had in store. Also in the issue, Carousel International celebrated 30 years in the kiddie ride business.

Cover Story

After nine years with the successful Neo-Geo system, ***SNK*** was poised to introduce the Hyper Neo-Geo 64 system with four times the capacity of the original. Hyper Neo-Geo offers three different game platforms: driver, gun game, and fighting/adventure. Plus, new software will continue to come out for the 50,000 Neo-Geo systems in the field.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Rowe's *Berkeley* (jukebox)
- Capcom's *Marvel vs. Capcom* (video)
- Internet Vending Systems' *NetPecker* (Internet terminal)
- QuickSilver's *Merlin's Magic Touch* and *Classic Jukebox* (bulk vending)
- Atari's *California Speed* (video)
- Outstanding Amusements' *Men's Room* and *Bomb's Away* (midway-style games)
- Sega Pinball's *Austin Powers* (coin drop) and *Udderly Tickets* (novelty)
- Sega's *Harley-Davidson & L.A. Rider* (video)

HOT GAMES

Video Simulators: *The Lost World Jurassic Park* (Sega)
Video Dedicated: *House of the Dead* (Sega)
Video Kits: *NFL Blitz* (Midway)
Pinball: *Medieval Madness* (Williams)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)
Classic Videos: *Pole Position* (Atari)
Alley Bowlers: *ICE Ball* (ICE)
Sports Games: *Hoop Shot* (ICE)
Single Cranes: *Rainbow* (Rainbow)
Children's Games: *Mini Dunxx* (ICE)
Roll Downs: *Spin To Win* (Lazer-Tron)
Novelty: *Cyclone* (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Knock Down* (Meltec)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)

Headline News

- Quantum 3D announced the newest version of its Game Control Interface for PC-based coin-op, kiosk, and LBE entertainment applications.
- The industry paid tribute to the late Joe Dillon of Williams Bally/Midway.
- AAMA and AMOA announced a cross promotion alliance for their respective trade shows.
- Two legislators in Florida co-sponsored the Children's Protection From Violence Act, which would ban anyone under 18 from viewing video games deemed violent.
- Madison Coin Machine of Madison, Wis., merged with Modern Specialty of Madison.
- Lazer-Tron introduced its new Video Redemption System.

"Coin Quotes"

"There is no doubt that kids want rides that emphasize fun. But we know that parents are more willing to indulge their little ones when an element of learning is involved."—Steven Veatch

"Operators are afraid to pay the going price for equipment, so they don't buy new games. On the other hand, if they make too many wrong decisions, they can be out of business."—Dan Sunday

"Although we read about the PC platform, it boils down to one thing: if a good game comes along operators will think about it then. The games are way more critical than the platform."—Vicki Sieben

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APRIL

Theme

Spring Equipment Catalog: Make a wish to know all the kiddie rides, cranes, novelties, photo booths, bop/stomp games, coin pushers, sports and children's games, virtual reality units, motion simulators, laser tag, alley bowlers, roll downs, coin-drops, bulk and prize vendors, and specialty machines. Wish granted!

Cover Story

Taking a cue from the popularity of video game kits that mean operators don't have to buy more video game cabinets to have new games, ***Lazer-Tron*** developed the Video Redemption System of interchangeable games such as *Prize Zone* and *Match 'Em Up*. The company predicted that the system would have a profound impact on the redemption industry.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Namco's *Ehrgeiz* and *Time Crisis II* (video)
- Dynamo's *Hot Flash II* (air hockey)
- Kodak's *Image Magic* (photo stickers)
- Quick Silver's *Showcase Vendor* (bulk vending)
- JVL's *Concorde 2* (countertop)
- Adventure Quest's *M4SX* (motion simulator)
- Millennium Amusement Group's *Monster Truck* and *Lunar Lander* (remote boat systems)
- Eschol Interactive's *Super B* (virtual reality)
- Lazer Tron's *Prize Zone* (novelty)
- Photo Art's *Sticker Star* (photo stickers)

HOT GAMES

Video Simulators: *Top Skater* (Sega)
Video Dedicated: *House of the Dead* (Sega)
Video Kits: *NFL Blitz* (Midway)
Pinball: *Medieval Madness* (Williams)
Classic Videos: *Out Run* (Sega)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)
Alley Bowlers: *Basket Fever* (Bay Tek)
Sports Games: *Super Shot* (Skee-Ball)
Single Cranes: *Rainbow* (Rainbow)
Children's Games: *Smart Toss Em* (Smart)
Roll Downs: *Rock N Roll* (Bay Tek)
Novelty: *Cyclone* (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Water Game* (Bob's Space Racers)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)

Coin Quotes

"Whether goals are written down or up in our heads, we must have them or we'll never be sure where we are going."—Harold Skripsky

"It would appear that the (Texas) attorney general and those with him are campaigning to eliminate an industry contrary to law and primarily through public statements, harassment, and intimidation."—Tom Fricke

"With the notable exception of SNK's Neo-Geo, each system was designed more or less from scratch, was in operation for just a year or two, and then tossed onto the scrap heap awaiting some inglorious fate in a landfill."—Randy Fromm

Headline News

- Gene Urso of Madison Coin Machine was named Play Meter "Operator of the Year" at the ASI show.
- The industry bid a fond farewell to Bob Breither who passed away the previous month.
- Parental advisory System posters were made available from AAMA, AMOA, IAFEC, IAAPA, and industry distributors.
- An informal survey of trade show preferences indicated that most operators still favor a fall show, although over one-third would like to see AMOA merge with ASI.
- Opus Entertainment was formed to take the lead in launching Acclaim's ArcadePC system.
- WMS Industries proceeded with the spin-off of its approximately 86.7 percent interest in Midway Games.

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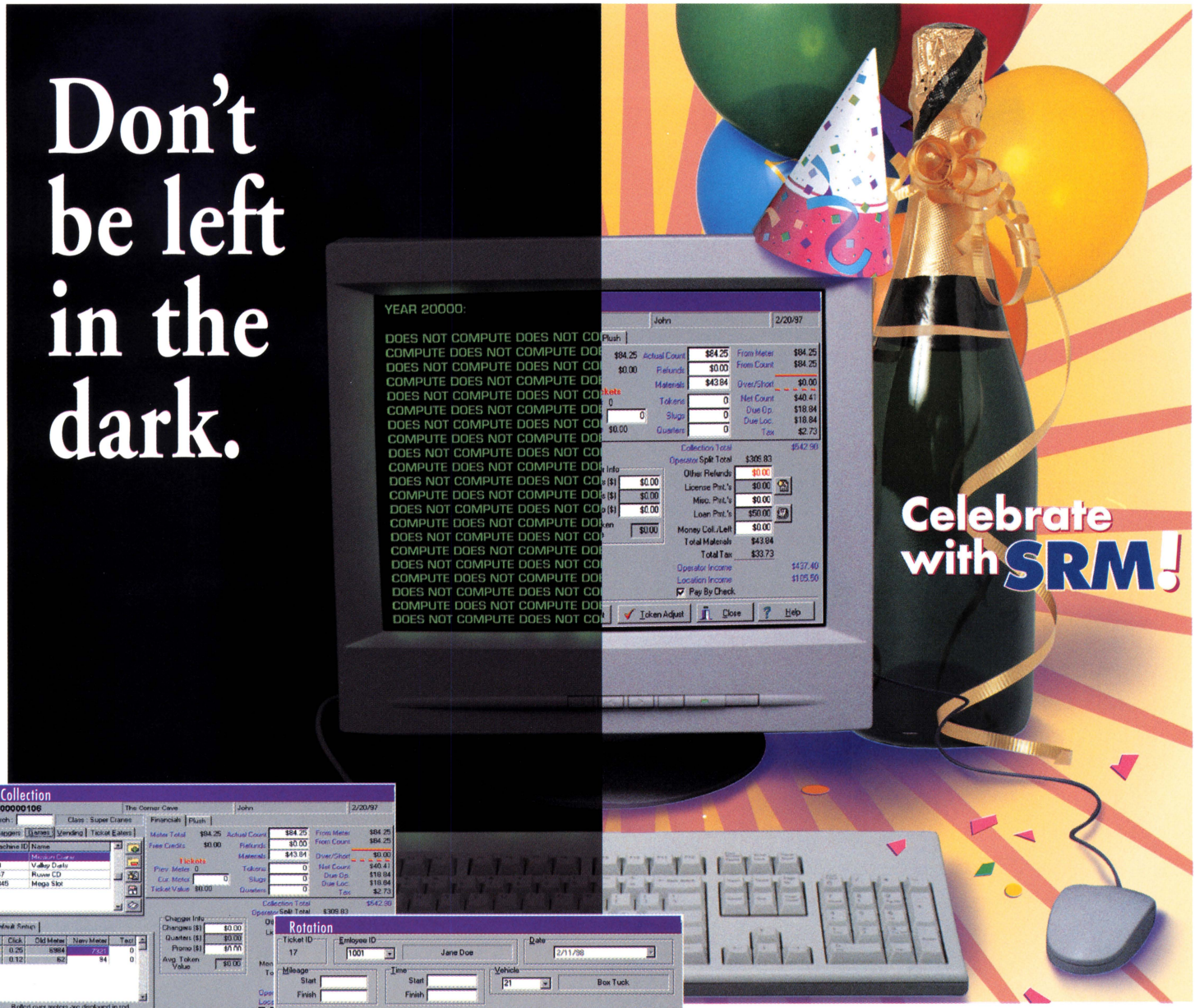

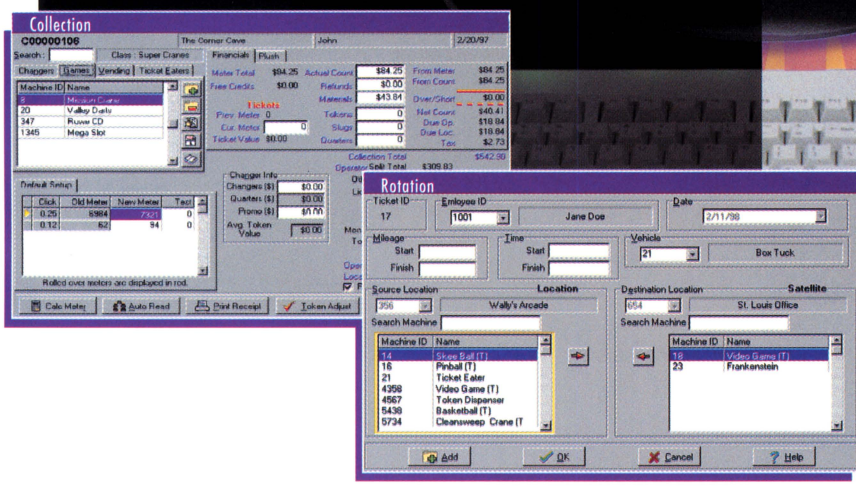

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MAY

Theme

ASI Wrap-Up: The headline read, "Industry rediscovers momentum." Siskel & Ebert would have given the show two thumbs up. Comments heard on the exhibit floor were virtually all positive. AAMA and AMOA officials shared ribbon-cutting duties in keeping with the cross promotion agreement between the two associations.

Cover Story

Rock-Ola brought to ASI an ever-expanding line of jukebox products with exciting looks, sound, and ease of operation. The company is high on its Automated Telecommunications System, developed in conjunction with Premier Data, that allows operators to monitor their routes using a familiar Windows-based computer.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Holoplex's *Combatica* (simulator)
- Fun Co.'s *ES-33* (cabinet)
- Konami's *Racing Jam, Teraburst*, and *Hiphopmania* (video)
- Lazer-Tron's *Roll-A-Rainbow* (roll down)
- EMT's *Alvin & the Chipmunks* and *Multi-Truck* (kiddie rides)
- Mini-Golf's *Pro Putter* (golf course)
- Sega Pinball's *Viper Night Drivin'* (pinball)
- Carousel's *Smokey Bear Jeep* (kiddie ride)
- Totem Magique's *World Cup* (bulk vending)
- Arachnid's *Black Widow* (darts)
- Midway's *Hyperdrive* (video)

HOT GAMES

Video Simulators: *The Lost World Jurassic Park* (Sega)
Video Dedicated: House of the Dead (Sega)
Video Kits: NFL Blitz (Midway)
Pinball: Medieval Madness (Williams)
Countertops: Megatouch XL (Merit)
Alley Bowlers: Basket Fever (Bay Tek)
Sports Games: tie—Hitter's Rally (Seidel) and Triple Jam (Coastal)
Single Cranes: Rainbow (Rainbow)
Children's Games: Smart Toss Em (Smart)
Roll Downs: Jungle Rama (Lazer-Tron)
Novelty: Cyclone (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: Big Haul (Benchmark)
Gun Games: Water Game (Bob's Space Racers)
Bopping/Stomping Games: Spider Stompin' (Island)
Prize Vendors: Sports Arena (Sammy USA)

Headline News

- LBE systems released an arcade version (*Quake Tournament Edition*) of the popular PC game, Quake.
- Richard Bueschel, industry historian and prolific author, succumbed to a brain tumor. The industry also lost Don Shimel of J-S Sales and Dave Trittel of Dynasty Amusements.
- A pilot test was undertaken to test the effect of isolating games that feature violent content.
- Operators in South Carolina awaited word from the state Supreme Court on whether video poker represents a lottery.
- Thanks in part to a grass roots effort by AMOA members, a vendor compensation amendment was approved in the pending tobacco legislation.
- Valley Recreation created separate divisions for table games and electronic games.

"Coin Quotes"

"Unfortunately, the promised wave of new PC-based games is still under development. I feel that the mindset of players in arcades is changing, and I am watching products and companies to see if they can catch the change."—Michael Getlan

"Revenue sharing is viable only if manufacturers come to us with a realistic proposal. If they have no consideration for our livelihood, like it is now anyway, it just won't work."—Jeff McAfoos

"If more operators can negotiate a better package, this industry will move away from the 50/50 split that has been around for what seems like an eternity and is the cause of a lot of hardships."—Rich Holley

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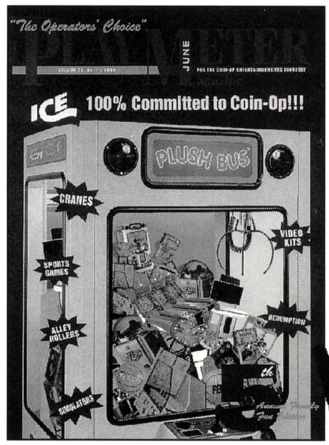
JUNE

Theme

5th Annual Family Fun Edition: Readers could explore the continually developing fun center segment of the industry in a special 40-page section that covered laser tag, high-tech centers, tokens, operations, debit cards, and case histories, along with comments from AMOA, IAFEC, and IAAPA.



Cover Story

Innovative Concepts in Entertainment (ICE) had a dream back in 1982 when it introduced its first game, *Chexx*. The game proved to have the staying power the industry needed then and still needs. From a solid foundation of providing games that players wanted, ICE has grown into one of the premier manufacturers.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Namco's *Downhill Bikers* (video)
- Bubble Gum Park's *Sportsmania* (bulk vending)
- Gamevision's *Zero Point* (video)
- Meltec's *Shootin' Hoops 2000*
- Valley's *Tornado 1000* (foosball) and *The Cat* (pool table)
- Modern Products' *Flying Elephants* (park ride)
- Sega's *Sega Rally 2* (video)
- Fun Industries' *Updated Copy Cat* (novelty)
- Midway's *Touchmaster 4000* (countertop)
- Machine-O-Matic's *Double Decker Northern Beaver Towers* (bulk vending)
- O.K. Mfg.'s *Kinetic Kid* (bulk vending)

HOT GAMES

Video Simulators: *The Lost World Jurassic Park* (Sega)
Video Dedicated: *House of the Dead* (Sega)
Video Kits: *Area 51/Max Force Duo* (Atari)
Pinball: *Viper Night Drivin'* (Sega Pinball)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)
Alley Bowlers: *Pro Striker* (Design Plus)
Sports Games: *Full Court Fever* (ICE)
Cranes/Rotaries: *Classic Watch Crane* (Smart)
Children's Games: *Smart Toss Em* (Smart)
Roll Downs: *Rock N Roll* (Bay Tek)
Novelty: *Solar Spin* (Lazer-Tron)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Knock Down* (Meltec)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)
Prize Vendors: *Sports Arena* (Sammy USA)

Headline News

- Jerry Gordon joined JVL as executive vice president.
- The Game Developer's Conference showcased ArcadePC products.
- Matt Barkin of Nickel Play in Modesto, Calif., died at the young age of 36.
- Dave & Buster's opened its newest location in the Detroit suburb of Utica, Mich.
- State Sales and Service in Baltimore, Md., acquired Mondial's offices in Bensalem, Pa., and Springfield, N.J.
- Game Works Studio opened near Los Angeles, Calif.
- Fun Merchants announced its Super 90 lease program.
- Entropy acquired a majority interest in Alter Enterprises.

"Coin Quotes"

"We are catering to children and families and we'd be remiss not to make it (game violence) a concern. Obviously, we are going to comply with the Parental Advisory System."—Dick George

"The language Intel and Microsoft were speaking was so different. They could not communicate to the coin-op industry what they were thinking, and didn't really know this business."—Amir Rubin

"Even though coin-op generates from 30 to 50 percent of an FEC's revenues, it is often the last and least thought through segment of such a facility."—Frank Seninsky

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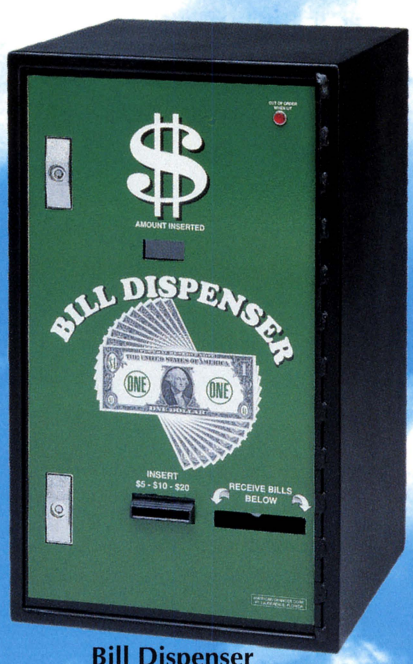

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JULY

Theme

For Kids Only: A never-ending stream of game-playing customers is coming along each year. Long before these customers of tomorrow are able to reach the controllers of the high-risk, high-return games they start out small. From kiddie rides and capsule vendors to modular play structures and kid-friendly places this issue had the little ones covered.

Cover Story

Award-winning ***Kiddie's Mfg.*** is proud of its kiddie ride line, especially licensed rides such as *Spider-Man, X-Men, NFL Helmet, Incredible Hulk, Harley-Davidson,* and the new interactive units featuring Looney Tunes characters that were introduced shortly after the company appeared on the cover. President Eric Torres said their rides transform education into interactive experiences for children.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Williams' *The Champion Pub* (pinball)
- New-Mark's *The Bubble Gum Park: Sportsmania* (bulk vendor)
- Zamperla's *Pecos Pony* (kiddie ride)
- Pierce Engineering's *Instant Photo Sticker Machine* (photo machine)
- KDK's *Nintendo 64 Slimboy* (bulk vendor)
- Midway's *Touchmaster 2000 Plus* (countertop)
- Impulse Amusements' *True Grip Challenge, Gina the Gypsy* (specialty)
- Atari's *Radikal Bikers* (video)
- QLT's *Wild Ride* (bulk vendor)
- Bestco's *Max 1* (Public Internet)
- Amusement Factory's *Octagon, Hot Shop* (bulk vendors)
- Global Gumball's *Illusion, Wowie!* (bulk vendors)
- Brand Imports' *Giant* (sticker machine)
- Quick Silver's *Quick Shot* Basketball (bulk vendor)
- Northwestern's *The Kiosk* (bulk vendor)
- Namco's *Family Bowl* (video), *Jackpot* (coin pusher)
- Panic Park (video), *Soul Calibur* (video)

HOT GAMES

Video Dedicated: *Time Crisis II* (Namco)
Video Kit: *Area 51/Maximum Force duo* (Atari)
Video Simulators: *Wave Shark* (Konami)
Alley Bowlers: *Basket Fever* (Bay Tek)
Sports Games: *Super Shot* (Skee-Ball)
Cranes/Rotaries: *Rainbow* (Rainbow)
Children's Games: *Shoot to Win! Jr.* (Smart)
Roll Downs: *Pizza Roll* (Bay Tek)
Novelty: *Claim Jumper* (Benchmark)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Water Game* (Bob's Space Racers)
Bopping\Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)
Prize Vendors: *Sports Arena* (Sammy USA)
Pinballs: *Medieval Madness* (Williams)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)

Coin Quotes

"This is a small industry and we all know each other. I'm proud of the fact that I got through 25 years without making a lot of enemies, and I'm proud to be associated with the coin-op business." —Bill Rickett

"Children are far more sophisticated than they were 10 years ago. Children are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from them. This is why a child will continue to put quarters in a game." —Bill Chiles

"My goal is to reduce the chunk of my pie that says 'income earned by video.' Kiddie rides are one of the areas I've turned to." —Rich Holley

Headline News

- In memory: Pat Harper of J&J Distributors passed away at 52.
- The McCain bill, focusing on tobacco issues, was killed by the Senate's Republican majority.
- Three divisions of Sega announced their plans to move to San Francisco.
- Randy Chilton of Chilton Vending, former AMOA president, announced that he had entered into an agreement with Sugarloaf, which operated over 10,000 cranes and was planning to expand.
- Data East closed its amusement division in the United States.
- Midway Games announced plans to begin a major test of its proprietary Wavenet arcade game network technology.
- 40,000 people attended the E3 show in Atlanta to view the latest in electronic entertainment.

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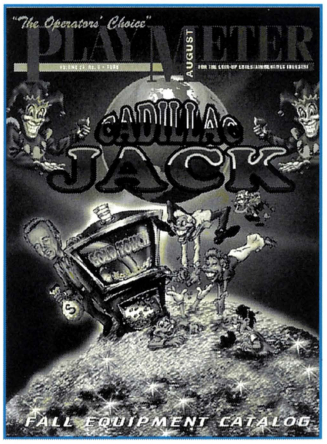
AUGUST

Theme

Fall Equipment Catalog: This Equipment Catalog, one of two during the year, was devoted to hightlighting what was available in street-friendly equipment. We featured product in categories from jukeboxes and countertops to upright videos and table games. Each product featured a photo and a brief description.



Cover Story

Cadillac Jack was sitting on top of the world with its extensive line of card and line games geared to the redemption market. Peeking around the corner of the *Gold Touch* game on the cover was a caricature of company president Mike Macke, who said the secret to the company's success is that "we design machines that comply with the laws and regulations outlined in the redemption markets."

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Quick Silver's *Merlin's Magic Touch, Classic Jukebox* (bulk vendors)
- Video Systems' *The Stamp Fan* (photo vendor)
- SNK's *Beast Busters, King of Fighters '98, Top Bomber* (video)
- Olive Entertainment's *Soccer Shot* (bulk vendor)
- Smart Golf's *Smart Golf LS3* (simulator)
- West Coast's *Lollipop Exchange* (bulk vendor)
- AllStar Dist.'s *Fun Stands* (bulk vendors)
- CompuPrizes' *CD-Rom Vendor* (prize vendor)
- Nationwide Services' *Four-in-One* (bulk vendor)
- Sega's *Daytona USA 2* (video)
- Mayoni's *SuperGrip* (specialty)

HOT GAMES

Video Dedicated: *Time Crises II* (Namco)
Video Kits: *Area 51/Maximum Force duo* (Atari)
Video Simulators: *The Lost World* (Sega)
Alley Bowlers: *Pro Striker* (Design Plus)
Sports Games: *Hoop Shot* (ICE)
Cranes/Rotaries: *Rainbow* (Rainbow)
Children's Games: *Shoot to Win! Jr.* (Smart)
Roll Downs: *Jungle Rama* (Lazer-Tron)
Novelty: *Cyclone Jr.* (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Water Game* (Bob's Space Racers)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)
Prize Vendors: *Sports Arena* (Sammy USA)
Pinballs: *Medieval Madness* (Williams)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)

Headline News

- A temporary injunction, filed by the Amusement and Music Operators of Texas in the face of unfair redemption law enforcement, was denied.
- Wurlitzer Jukebox Co. moved from the New York area to new U.S. office and warehouse facilities in Gurnee, Ill.
- Namco Europe announced the appointed of long-time industry veteran Frank Ballouz.
- In memory: Scott Milner, parts manager for SunBelt Amusement, passed away from cancer.
- Midway shipped the home version of Mortal Kombat 4 to retailers.
- The Amusement and Music Operators Association (AMOA), sponsor of the AMOA show, and The American Amusement Machine Association (AAMA), sponsor of the ASI show, announced plans to join forces to cross promote their shows.
- Namco Cybertainment emerged from Chapter 11, which it had filed to be in a better negotiating positions with some of its leases.
- Jerry Gordon, who retired from Rowe International several years before, joined JVL, manufacturer of the Concorde touchscreen countertop game.

"Coin Quotes"

"Our industry needs customers. We want them to come back. Even the greatest games and well appointed atmosphere will not draw them back if they are not treated like your business depends on them." —Valerie Cognevich

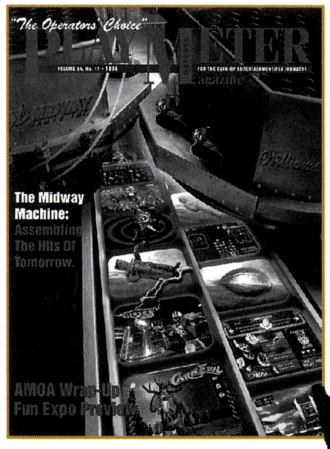
"I don't believe for one moment that games cause kids to behave violently. We played war, cops and robbers, and cowboys and Indians with lots of shooting and killing each other, but we didn't become killers. That was in the '60s, though." —JLO's Mike Vaughan

"While the out-of-home arcade industry was getting the shaft, the computer industry was becoming PC." —Dennis Sable

SEPTEMBER

Theme

AMOA Preview: AMOA was gearing up to celebrate its 50th anniversary in an appropriate location for an association formed around music issues—Nashville, Music City USA. AMOA began in 1948 as MOA, founded to protect the industry's interests in licensing and government issues. The baby boom was in full swing, and young men home from the war were settling into civilian life. Pinballs and jukeboxes were back in production in a big way.



Cover Story

You mention ***Sega*** and you think of several things: huge simulators, majestic game rooms, impressive home games, and challenging pinballs. There are separate companies responsible for each, all worthy of their own story. In this issue, however, we focused on just one of them. The company we knew casually as Sega announced a name change to Sega Enterprises Inc. USA and is charting a new course in the coin-op industry.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Atari's Vapor *TRX* (video)
- Sega Pinball's *Lost in Space* (pinball)
- Skee-Ball's *Alley Hoops* (ball roll down)
- Opus' *Actua Soccer* (video)
- J. Nelson Technology's *Mind Bender DV* (countertop)
- Creative Products' *The Lollipop Mine* (bulk vendor)

HOT GAMES

Video Dedicated: *Time Crises II* (Namco)
Video Kit: *Fisherman's Bait* (Konami)
Video Simulator: *The Lost World* (Sega)
Alley Bowler: *ICE Ball* (ICE)
Sports Games: *Hoop Shot* (ICE)
Cranes/Rotaries: *Rainbow* (Rainbow)
Children's Games: (tie) *Mini Dunxx* (ICE)
(tie) *Shoot to Win! Jr.* (Smart)
Roll Downs: *Spin to Win* (Lazer-Tron)
Novelty: *Cyclone* (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: *Austin Powers* (Sega Pinball)
Gun Games: *Miner's Revenge* (Lazer-Tron)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)
Prize Vendors: *Sports Arena* (Sammy U.S.A.)
Pinball: *Medieval Madness* (Williams)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)

Headline News

* Parental Advisory Message Clear: Sen. Kohl and Sen. Lieberman made it clear that they are going to be watching the industry closely to see if we make good on our promise.

* Industry Mourns Schubert: Frank Schubert, a 21-year employee of Coin Mechanisms passed away.

* New Era Dawns for AMOA: After 13 years with managment company Smith, Bucklin, AMOA announced that it would once again have its own independent staff.

* Midway debuted *NFL Blitz '99* with a Nintendo card reader to allow players to create plays on the Nintendo 64 version of NFL Blitz, save them to a memory card, and use them in the coin-op *NFL Blitz '99*.

* Twin Galaxies kicked off a new video game contest progam at Namco Cybertainment in Mobile, Ala. Three new world records were set.

* Venture expanded its product line with the purchase of certain assets of American International Shuffleboard and the company's Sol Lipkin joined Venture.

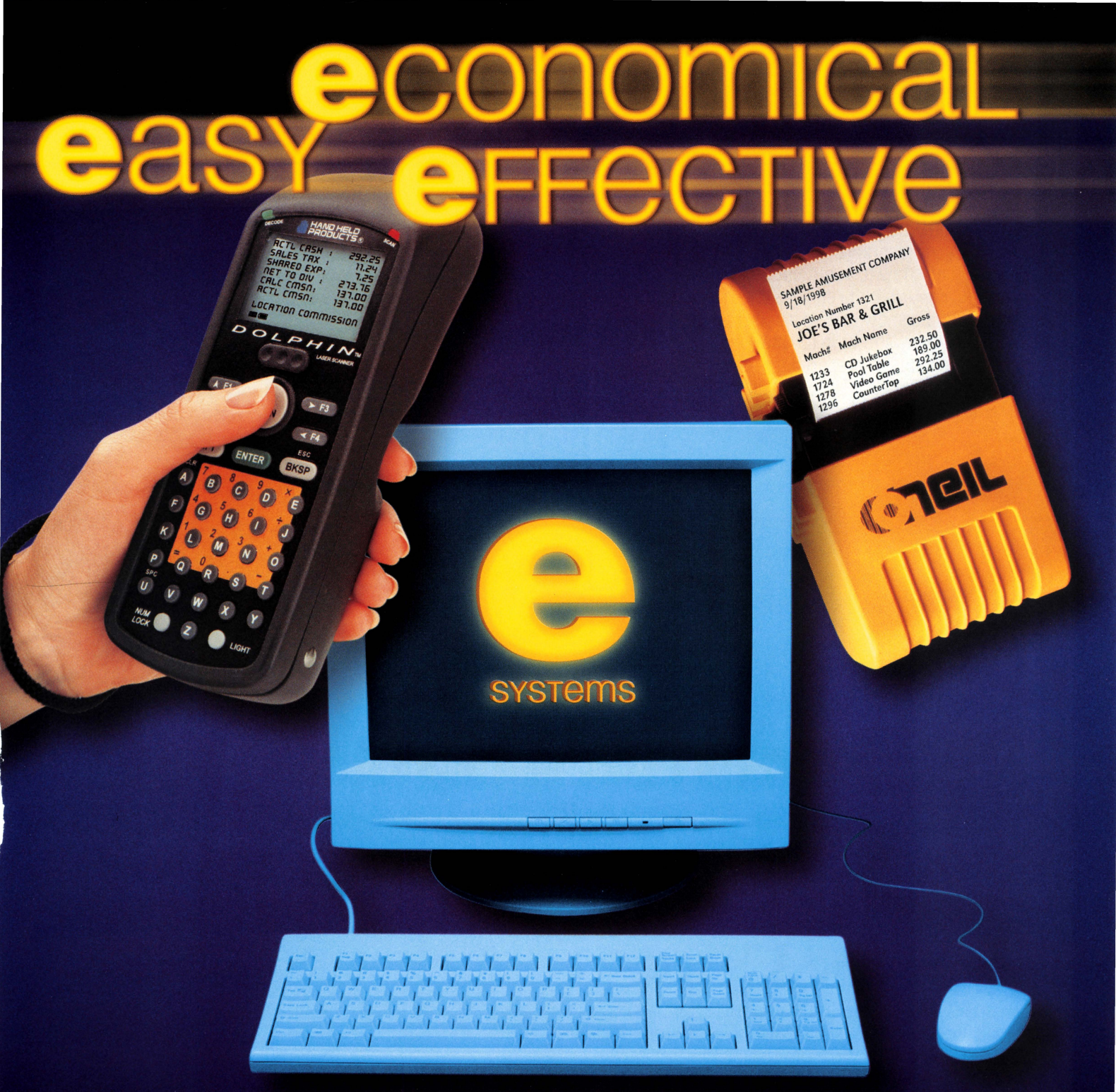
* It was announced that Andrew Jackson would join Ben Franklin ($100 bill) and Ulysses S. Grant ($50 bill) in a totally new light in the fall release of the newly designed $20 bill, aimed at making it easier to authenticate the real bills and harder to copy.

"Coin Quotes"

"Your editor's decision to devote several pages to news from the Game Developers Conference validates the conference's cross platform position and demonstrates that there's a lively dialogue to be had between the developers and publishers of PC/console games and the arcade industry." —Jennifer Pahlka

"The goal now is to allow hundreds of experienced home developers to turn their creative talents toward our market." —Norm Petermeier

"I would like to see more for street locations, especially kits. We've been blessed with Golden Tee 3D Golf *and the countertops; pool and darts are steady. But we need more kits so we can get back to where we can operate in all of our locations effeciently." —John Estridge Jr.*



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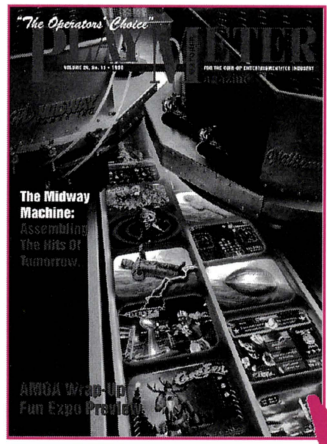
OCTOBER

Theme

AMOA Wrap-Up and Fun Expo Preview: AMOA, which celebrated its 50th anniversary had a low turn-out but many were still happy with the show. Comments from the show carried a common thread, too many shows in too short a time. As the industry prepared to travel to Orlando, Disney Quest was featured in the issue.



Cover Story

The Midway Machine: Assembling the Hits of Tomorrow. Midway continues to produce games that operators and players enjoy. Among the latest featured on the cover were *NFL Blitz '99* with engaging new incentives for players to venture from home to the arcade, *Touchmaster* in countertop and upright, and *The Champion Pub* and *Monster Bash* pinballs.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Capcom Coin-Op's *Street Fighter Alpha 3* (video)
- Atari's *Site 4* (video)
- Technik's *Card Master-8* (phone card machine)
- Sega's *Dynamite Cop* (video)
- Bumper Buggy's *Flying Saucer* (bumper car)
- Creative Electronics' *Pac-Man & Ms. Pac-Man* (Galaxy system)
- Amazing Amusements' *FoozBreaker* (novelty)

HOT GAMES

Video Dedicated: *Time Crisis II* (Namco)
Video Kit: *Golden Tee '98* (Incredible Technologies)
Video Simulators: *Top Skater* (Sega)
Alley Bowlers: *Basket Fever* (Bay Tek)
Sports Games: *Super Shot* (Skee-Ball)
Cranes/Rotaries: *Rainbow* (Rainbow)
Children's Games: *Mini Dunxx* (ICE)
Roll Downs: (tie) *Spin To Win* (Lazer-Tron)
(tie) *Spin-A-21* (Lazer-Tron)
Novelty: *Cyclone* (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Water Game* (Bob's Space Racers)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)
Prize Vendors: *Sports Arena* (Sammy U.S.A.)
Pinballs: *Medieval Madness* (Williams)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)

Headline News

- Senate Bill Could Impact Coin-Op: The Senate version of a bill included the Internet Gambling Prohibition Act, which could inadvertently make interactive amusement illegal.
- Merit Industries, makers of the Megatouch countertop, was purchased by the Riverside Co., a diversified financial group.
- Valley and Dynamo Merge: The two leading pool table manufacturers announced that they were joining forces and creating a new entity called Valley-Dynamo L.P. to merge pool, table soccer, table hockey, video cabinets, and home product divisions.
- Fun Expo and the International Association of Family Entertainment Centers signed a 10-year sponsorship agreement.
- Dave & Buster's settled litigation with the limited liability corporation formed by the creditors of Edison Brothers Stores that had filed a lawsuit.
- TouchTunes announced that it had placed its first digitally downloaded jukeboxes on location.

"Coin Quotes"

"As in all industries, the period following rapid growth is usually known as the maturation phase. We all know that since the late 1980s the FEC segment of the industry has literally exploded. Along with this growth, we've seen new and exciting concepts. But in some cases these developments have struggled badly or fizzled out completely." —Harold Skripsky

"Studies have shown that only about two percent of cigarettes bought by teens come from cigarette vending machines. Ironically, although I'm an avid non-smoker, I stood up in front of the city council and argued issues. I tried to explain that vending machines were not the problem." —Rick Zarick

"It may be prophetic that the first letters in our industry's Parental Advisory System spell PAS. Strict compliance is the goal, and a passing grade in the eyes of Congress will be the outcome as manufacturers, distributors, and operators unite to do the right thing." —Bonnie Theard

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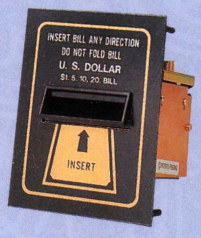
U.S. 1,5,10,20



HSV-300
U.S. 1,5,10,20

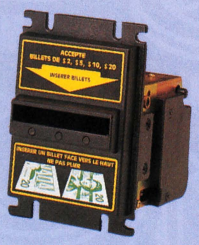
BL-400-US4S4
U.S. 1,5,10,20

BL-600-US2
U.S. 1,5

BL-600-US4
U.S. 1,5,10,20

BL-600-US4S6
U.S. 1,5,10,20

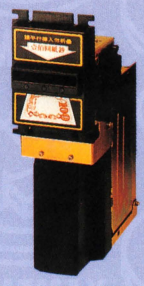
BL-2001-US4
U.S. 1,5,10,20



BL-600-CA4
C.A. 2,5,10,20 (NEW/OLD)

BL-600-CA4S6
C.A. 2,5,10,20 (NEW/OLD)

BL-600-NT1
N.T. 100



BL-600-NT1S6
N.T. 100

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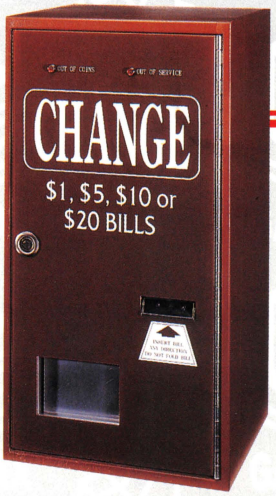

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U.S. 1,5,10,20

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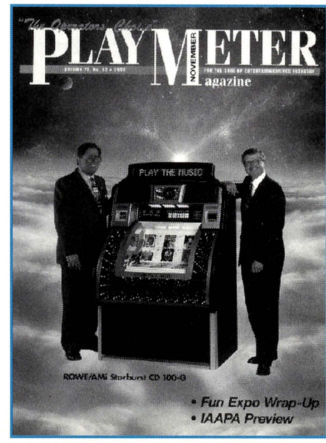
NOVEMBER

Theme

IAAPA Preview and Fun Expo Wrap-Up: Once again, two shows in one issue. IAAPA was looking forward to its "show as big as Texas" in Dallas, while Fun Expo was called a turning point. With sparse attendance, the talk was focused on what options were available to perhaps combine some shows. With AMOA and Fun Expo just days apart in Las Vegas next year, some changes are expected.



Cover Story

Rowe International, manufacturer of a line of jukeboxes that has won *Play Meter's* Operator's Choice Award and AMOA's Best Jukebox Award for many years, donned the cover. The company, in business since 1909, suffered some serious setbacks. However, instead of breaking, Rowe became much stronger, has turned the corner, and is moving rapidly forward.

★★ WHAT'S NEW ★★

- Incredible Technologies' *Virtual Pool* (video)
- Fun Co.'s *CT-2000* (cabinet)
- Incredible Technologies' *Countertop* (cabinet)
- Traffic Jam's *Sportfishin' Simulator* (video)
- Rowe's *Starburst, Encore, Sunrise* (jukeboxes)
- Venture's *Lit'l Maverick* (pool table)
- Midway's *TouchMaster 5000* (countertop)
- Atari's *Gauntlet Legends* (video)
- Williams' *Monster Bash* (pinball)
- Carousel Vending's *Carousel 1000* (bulk vendor)
- Nationwide's *Trading Pioneer* (bulk vendor)
- Namco's *Soul Calibur* (video)
- Namco's *Time Crisis II* (video)
- Opus Entertainment's *The Reap* and *Crazy Bus* (video)

HOT GAMES

Video Dedicated: *Time Crisis II* (Namco)
Video Kit: *Area 51/Max Force Duo* (Atari)
Video Simulator: *The Lost World* (Sega)
Alley Bowlers: *Basket Fever* (Bay Tek)
Sports Games: *Super Shot* (Skee-Ball)
Cranes/Rotaries: *Rainbow* (Rainbow)
Children's Games: *Mini Dunxx* (ICE)
Roll Downs: *Pokereno* (Seidel)
Novelty: *Cyclone* (ICE)
Coin Drop Games: *Big Haul* (Benchmark)
Gun Games: *Water Game* (Bob's Space Racers)
Bopping/Stomping Games: *Spider Stompin'* (Island)
Prize Vendors: *Fun-E-Ball* (Fun Industries)
Pinballs: *Monster Bash* (Williams)
Countertops: *Megatouch XL* (Merit)

Headline News

➸ Quantum3D and Midway Home Entertainment announced the availability of the Raven 3D/2D graphics accelerator with a 'hot three' game bundle.

➸ AMOA issues "Action Alert" for Vendors: AMOA urged vendors to write Phillip Morris to protest its decision to discontinue its vending subsidy program.

➸ Atlus Dream Entertainment and SNK reached an agreement in which SNK dropped its counterclaims against Atlus Dream.

➸ Warehouse of Vending and Games in St. Louis, Mo., acquired the Colorado Game and Vending Exchange of Denver, Colo. The new company will be known as Warehouse of Vending and Games of Colorado Inc.

➸ Mark Struhs departed Dynamo after nearly 20 years to become vice president of sales and marketing for Midway Games.

➸ Dave & Buster's opened its newest store and 15th U.S. location in New York.

➸ Bob Lentz left Merit Industries to join World Wide Distributing as a sales executive.

"Coin Quotes"

"You can't buy off-the-shelf PCs and bring them into the arcade market with any hope they will survive. There's a whole laundry list of why that's the case. The first thing is that the arcade environment is very harsh for a variety of reasons." —Ross Smith

"The coin-op industry has been blessed with some exemplary times. We've withstood hurricane-force winds coming from all directions, and we've enjoyed some of the most wonderful times anyone has had in a business." —Valerie Cognevich

"I grew up in an era of Westerns in both the movies and television, where shootouts were commonplace and the good guy prevailed over the bad guy. The lines of good and evil were clearly drawn." —Bonnie Theard

DECEMBER

Thank you to all of our loyal readers for making us "The Operators' Choice"!

Happy Holidays

From your friends at

PLAY METER

The ArcadePC initiative has had everyone scratching their heads not only about what it will mean to our industry, but what it actually means. We heard companies vow to offer product to an eager industry, but those promises were short-lived.

Can Ferris offer the total solution for ArcadePCs?

Last month we had a lengthy interview with Ross Smith of Quantum3D. His views on the ArcadePC initiative were pretty straightforward—you need a special "ruggedized" PC and you must modify home games to work in an arcade environment.

As we talked with Bob Ferris and Lance Loesberg of Ferris Productions for this month's column, it seemed clear that if they were talking about the same concept, they were taking a much different viewpoint. They insist that any off-the-shelf PC will do and home games are just fine the way they are for the arcade with Ferris' Universe Board to act as a go-between.

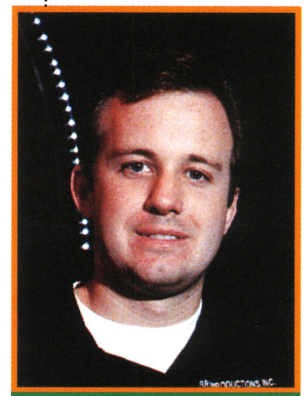
After reading this interesting interview and reflecting on what you understand, don't miss next month's issue for another insight into the ArcadePC initiative.

Tell us a little about your company.

The company started in 1993 while I was a student at the University of Arizona. We worked on projects for the university using virtual reality applications, which developed into virtual reality entertainment. We tried Virtuality equipment and felt we could build a better product. Our company grew with little funding by doing small projects. Eventually, we evolved into other types of equipment like the theaters that have been popular in certain niche markets. Those were successful because they brought in elements that others didn't.

When Virtuality, a leader in virtual reality, went out of business we looked hard at what we could do to retain the virtual reality industry. We hired Virtuality's Lance Loesberg, but we still had to answer the question: How do we get good software and lots of it? The Universe Board was developed to find an answer to that question.

How could the Universe Board, developed for virtual reality use, be used in the ArcadePC market?


Bob Ferris

After developing the Universe Board primarily for virtual reality software, we realized we were a year ahead of everyone in the ArcadePC market. The same technology we used for virtual reality—minus a few bells and whistles—could be put into a wooden arcade cabinet with little effort.

The only difference is that with virtual reality you need something that tracks your head movement; in an arcade machine there is no need for that. However, you still need to accept money, vend time, give a good experience, warn players that the experience is about to expire, etc.

Our initial goal was to break the barrier between limited and unlimited software. When we looked at Virtuality, we knew it wasn't enough to take over what they were doing; obviously there was a problem with their model.

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That problem seemed to be a lack of software of the quality needed. We had to devise a method to address that. We looked to the vast selection of PC games and came up with the idea of using the effort of those software companies because we knew we couldn't hire a thousand people to develop software. Virtuality proved it wouldn't work.

Lance: Developers for the home market have resources dollar-wise and personnel-wise to dedicate to home games, which are far superior to any you can obtain in the arcade industry. We combined it with our platform that had the ability to take that software and make it behave as it needed to in the arcade industry.

Did you first do virtual reality games from home games?

We were developing the technology to be able to do that. We spent a year building what I think of as an escalator. Everyone else in the ArcadePC movement spent a year taking one step up the stairs to the final result—a solid ArcadePC market. We knew that at the end of that year, we could turn on the switch that would take the industry to the top.

Others were taking one step working with one software company on one game to become an arcade game. We took the approach of developing technology to make a total solution. The Universe Board was only completed a few months ago. But already we have the Universe Board in a cabinet with a game—the total solution. The Universe Control Board is at the heart of our VR system and our ArcadePC system.

Please explain the Universe Board.

In simple terms, it acts like somebody inside the cabinet working the computer, doing all the right things at the right times. If you were in front of your computer and hit "enter" to go into Word Perfect, our board could do the same thing. But that's not enough. If you hit "enter" and go into Word Perfect, you don't want to see that menu in an arcade so our board switches to a different video that shows something like the company's logo. The board does the housekeeping. It makes everything look tidy and neat so no one is even aware that there is a PC inside. But in fact there is a PC running a game with the Universe Board helping it do everything without the player being aware or the operator hiring someone to do all the right things.

Let me see if I have this straight. You take a home PC game straight off the shelf and it's ready to go. Is that all there is to it? Will operators be able to take a game off the shelf and plug it into this system?

No. We are going to do it because there are licenses involved. It's hard to explain all of the things that the Universe Board does. It would be like ask-

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ing a designer to explain all of the features of his game. There's a great sound at a certain level, a great graphic at another level, etc. It does audio at the right time, so if you insert a coin it says, "coin inserted."

Remember, this is all done by the

Ferris' ArcadePC system which includes the Universe Board.

board, not by the software. That's why I can take a computer software game and use it in this system. It still needs to say, "you're out of money" and other such messages, but all of those messages are on a CD player that the Universe Board talks to. It's a template that can be applied that makes the system work for the arcade. This is all transparent to the operator. All he sees from a Universe System is that it's much easier to upgrade, there's a PC that's different, it has more capability than a circuit board, and it's not going to be outdated in six months. Their PCs are intended to be upgraded for years of use.

Lance: The most important thing is that it bridges the gap between taking PC game software and using it for arcades. It couldn't be done before, or someone would have been doing it. Our Universe Board takes that software and makes it an arcade-playable game.

But does the Universe Board actually change the game play itself ?

No. We don't touch the source code in the game.

I've always thought that a home game was designed for someone who had hours, days, months, years to figure out all the nuances of the game. While arcade games were designed to capture that player within the first few minutes and give him a rewarding experience. Am I wrong?

It's a total misconception, stereotyping pure and simple. It's very easy for someone with an arcade mindset to have that kind of philosophy because they aren't open and don't understand the variety of PC games. There are even three or four home PC games that call themselves arcade games. They are as much an eye-candy draw as you've ever seen.

I think, though, that our paradigm has to shift a little with the PC. One limitation at the current stage of the Universe Board is that it is time-based play. However, I think that's better. I've been very upset when I plunk 50 cents into a game only to find that some operator has adjusted the knobs so that it was super hard, and I spend only 30 seconds on the game. That's pathetic.

Eye-candy and getting players hooked falls by the wayside. My time was stolen. The PC arcade revolution might involve longer playing times, but since the average arcade game gets played an average of eight minutes in two hours, there is plenty of time for people to play. I don't think that a game with a lot of depth is in danger of not doing well in the arcade. That would be focusing on the downside of the current games. Maybe that eye-candy draw can only last a few minutes because there is no real depth. There's no real mystery to solve. Maybe the PC has cracked through that.

The bottom line is that we could put out in one year more pure arcade titles than the arcade industry has done in the last three years because we're selecting games from hundreds of companies. In the arcade industry now, about four companies tell us what software we're going to see next year, and it's not a whole lot. The choices are getting even thinner, as the PC gets better. Kids are staying home. They're not spending their money in the arcade. The only way to buck that cycle is to bridge the gap between PC games and arcade games. At least the arcades will have a fighting chance against the PC revolution. We're giving them a platform they couldn't easily afford at home.

Do you think that the graphics kids see on their home PCs are as good as they'll find in the arcade games?

About a year ago, a major thing happened. The graphics on the PC got better than the graphics in the arcade. Dedicated boards had always been better than the games you could buy for your computer. It's at the point where we had to go to a higher class of monitor two levels above all other monitors just to be compatible with computer graphics. We use a Super VGA monitor; the best you normally see in arcade games is an EGA. People come by our booth, see the arcade cabinet, and expect arcade graphics. They do a double-take when they see what we have in that cabinet.

Do you have games out in the field now?

We have a virtual reality machine with *Heavy Gear* on a Virtuality conversion. We have not tested the stand-up box, which is in the final stage of coming out. The technology is there. Now it's doing the last minute integration with the cabinet and putting it into locations. Because of our flexibility, if a game doesn't do well, we can swap it out.

Lance: We can appeal to anyone's choice of games and demographics. If you know a type of game you need for your customers that will appeal to them in mass quantities, we can get it.

How does virtual reality differ from the ArcadePC market, and are you

trying to appeal to the same customers?

Lance: Due to the prohibitive costs involved, virtual reality is limited to a fairly narrow marketplace, usually high-tech arcades. We see the ArcadePC fitting in far across the board from high-tech centers to mom & pop locations. VR is more targeted to the upper 10 percent of the industry, whereas the ArcadePC is for everyone.

If you are using the same Universe Board and the same games in both VR and ArcadePC systems, why is the cost so different?

Lance: The physical pod or shell itself is one difference, but the biggest chunk is the headmount display, a $5,000 piece of equipment. One of those is almost the price of an arcade game.

The other factor that makes VR prohibitive for many is that you must have someone staffing it. Some have gotten tricky by using the person doing the redemption counter to run their VR. Although a lot of places would love to be charging $4 for VR, they don't want to add the staff. Arcade machines are much less supervised.

Is your Universe Board and system Open Arcade Architecture compatible?

The word is actually compliant. Intel is planning to introduce a certification program, which I understand is basically minimum computing power of the PC, it must have a certain processor, and certain memory. We meet or exceed all of the requirements with our current unit. We are going to build every six months because technology always changes, but we want to keep it consistent for a period of time.

So yes, we are OAA compliant. The issue is that we know we have by far the easiest upgrade system, and because of that we feel comfortable that many of our customers will stick with Universe compatible upgrades. You have OAA, which insures that it's not a 486 when customers expect a Pentium II. It's a general guideline so someone can't accidently buy snake oil from someone who tries to sell them an ArcadePC machine with a 286 processor.

Did you say you can use your Universe Board in any off-the-shelf PC?

The Universe Board is external; it actually goes into the cabinet, not into the PC. That's the big difference between us and other firms. It connects to any computer like a keyboard. You can think of the Universe Board as a really sophisticated keyboard that has all kinds of brains in it so it will know what to do. If you have a keyboard, how many computers can you plug that into? You can take it to any computer and it'll do what it's supposed to do. But the computer has to have the right software loaded. Even if you have a keyboard, you can't take it to a computer, and run Microsoft Word unless Microsoft Word is loaded on that computer.

I've heard comments from industry people who say that regular off-the-shelf computers are not durable enough to stand up to arcade use and abuse. The arcade environment can be brutal. How do you address that?

Unless it's manufactured incorrectly, that's a non-issue. The biggest issue is the software. The reason I think this is that when we got our first group of prototypes for this system, do you know where they put the most fragile items? Inside the cabinet. They figured that even if this thing got beat up in shipping, the one safe place is inside this one-inch thick plywood cabinet that is screwed, doweled, and glued together. They were right. The stuff inside wasn't damaged. I think the safest place in an arcade is inside the cabinet. If there's a riot, I want to be inside an arcade cabinet. I don't think 1/8-inch steel around me is going to help if I have this enclosure. In order to break into a PC inside of an arcade cabinet you would have to physically dent through the wood and create a gapping hole.

The issue, though, is vibration, cooling, and things like that. These are valid concerns. We have in our system a total of four fans including an exhaust fan on the unit itself which we think is important. Some companies are throwing a ton of fans on their machines hoping that it's going to solve the problem without putting a fan on the cabinet. But we know you need a fan on the cabinet.

What computer are you using in your system?

It's a 300 Pentium II computer; we're following OAA guidelines. We've gone through our processes of figuring out what the Universe Board must do, things like allowing the PC to be turned on and off. The difference is that when we go through our process we are thinking of the whole solution. A graphics card company, for example, would be like a keyboard company promoting the monitor market so they would sell more keyboards.

When an operator tells you that an arcade is a rough environment, they think they need a stronger computer. But no, the arcades are rough on the Happ buttons, on the microswitches, trackballs, etc. That's where all the abuse is applied. That's why we have Lexan covers. Our standpoint is more of a total solution package because you can't just make one piece and hope that everyone else is going to do the right work and figure out the right things to make your one piece work in their total package.

Even if a company is doing a great job with one product, they could lose sight of everything else because they aren't doing the whole package.

At this point everyone in the know is saying that some company is going to come up with a PC platform that will make sense, and that's what everyone is waiting on. They're not waiting for some wonderful standard to be met. Standards don't bring coins into the bucket. The thing that standards help with is being able to swap between software among different manufacturers. But that's a long ways off.

Do you think operators are con-

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cerned where games come from or do they just want good games? And how could it be as simple as taking a home game and putting it in a cabinet for the arcade?

You're hitting on a point we've had to wrestle with: do we spend a year working on one game that we hope at the end of the year will still be technologically sufficient to motivate earnings in an arcade and work with the software company to tailor their game to the arcade? Do we do that knowing that the software company we pick may not be willing to devote the time and effort to change that game play to make it act like an arcade game.

I guess I don't understand the process of redoing a PC game for the arcade. Could you explain?

Coding is hard to explain. When you change one area it can affect a lot of other things. It's like on Ford's assembly line. If you want to do leather seats instead of cloth, someone notices that the leather is thicker and the clamps don't clamp so now you need new clamps. But wait, those clamps are produced in the plastics line. Everything seems to explode. It is the same when you get a software company starting to make changes. One thing leads to another. They start looking at their markets—50 ArcadePCs in the market when they have to sell thousands to recoup their investment. So what will they do? Will they release their arcade game, or will they release their home game and pick up a check for millions?

The bottom line is that we had to make a choice: do we grossly limit our selection because not every PC developer is going to work with us when we ask them to change their source code? Then you start finding marginal games from developers that no one has ever heard of. When you ask them to change their source codes they get cold feet. And they don't have the expertise for it anyway. Having a software company change their source code to make their home games into arcade games is a problem.

So back to our decision about whether to limit our choices or have a sweeping selection of software. Our choice was easy when we looked at it like that. The game we showed at Fun Expo had kids waiting in line to play. We were next to a $40,000 motion simulator that had three screens, but the kids waited in line for our game. It's a perfect example of a game that would have been out of our reach if we had asked the company to modify its game for our specifications when they have so much else going on. The software company is going to sell millions of dollars worth of that game to the home market and the last thing they care about is a non-existent ArcadePC movement.

You said in a seminar at Fun Expo that Ferris was going to invest nearly $2 million worth of equipment to a lease-type program or on revenue-share basis. Can you explain that?

We would try to go direct to a location or in certain locations to an operator. If it's a revenue-share program, we can't have too many splits in the pie.

Lance: Ultimately, we'd like to go through a distributor network, but initially they aren't waiting in line to buy the system. We have taken it upon ourselves to prove that it can work.

What kind of response have you gotten here at the Fun Expo?

I'll be frank with you, we've been told that distribution is dead. The only thing you need from a distributor is service, but why would you need that on an ArcadePC when there are 80 companies in any city to service your PC. With the Internet providing direct access to the manufacturer, the philosophy is that distributors are a dying breed. I think we're moving toward a very painful situation where there are a lot of ArcadePC-based games in arcades and the distributor network will be thinned out. I guess I'm a little surprised that we only had one distributor stop by our booth.

Lance: But that distributor had a much different philosophy. He said he has completely changed the way he is doing business after 21 years. He had decided to go away from traditional distribution avenues. He has no warehouse, no facility. Everything is drop-shipped and, he was very earnest on our product since he's changing the way a distributor operates. His view is that unless distributors change the way they work and how they perceive the business, they won't be able to afford to stay in business. The margins aren't big enough, and they have to operate on very large volumes.

Operators usually aren't too excited about a revenue-share program. What have you heard?

We'd use only selected locations, put units free of charge, and collect half the revenue. We'd do upgrades and things like that. We will also be selling the unit because there are a lot of locations that don't want to revenue share. We are not exactly sure what is going to be required to jump start the ArcadePC movement. We know that we are in the best position to do it because of the technology and the software we can bring out. We have the most types of platforms, the most types of software, and the last thing we need is the most types of options to get it out the most effective way.

We are looking at options like selling the cabinet at below our cost to produce, doing revenue share in which we pay for the entire unit when it's put out, leasing, using leasing companies, and some other ways. It's premature to say how we're going to go because we have to evaluate all the information we've received. Like I said in the seminar, the goal is for the operator to make money. We thought that maybe the best way is revenue share, but I didn't have one person come up to me afterwards and ask me about it. When I mention it, they say they want to buy. If you say we'll only sell them, they want revenue share. There's a huge demand for this type of system in the market, and we need to get it out there as soon as possible.

How has the concept changed over the two years since it was first pre-

sented to the industry?

Lance: It was a great idea. The premise was to have a PC or some kind of platform out there that you could throw software in and out of cheaply to keep it going. The problem was that when people started doing it, even though they used a PC, they still had to redevelop a software that already existed. It became painful and expensive until we developed the Universe Board. That question has been resolved. We now have the ability to access all the software very fast and cheap. Then we can convert it for the arcade.

If other companies introduce OAA compatible games, will they work on your system?

Yes, if some companies want to do small changes in their software because even a minute change will make it work better, but we assume the worst case scenario where a software company says, "Here's my CD, I authorize you to convert it to arcade, and that's as far as I'll go." The problem was that two years ago when this was announced, no one stepped up to the plate and said, "Now let's figure out how to make it work." It didn't happen. You have two years of article after article talking about the ArcadePC movement and what software will work. But they are all just generalizations and stereotypes. It's hard for reporters to get any meat when there's nothing out there to grab hold of. They are trying to keep the notion alive so people stay interested in it, but there is very little meat.

Why would players spend money in an arcade to play the exact same game they can play on their home PC?

First of all, you have to understand the probability. I'm a systems engineer by degree, and one thing you learn is that to get a probability of a sequence of events you multiply all the probabilities together. This seems complicated but you'll see where I'm going with this. We are looking at the chance of the player owning a computer. Then multiply that by the chance of him having a good graphics card. Multiply that by the chance of him owning the game that's in that particular arcade cabinet. Finally, multiply that by the chance of him not liking the game and not wanting to play it. Or you could multiply it by the chance that he likes the game, but only wants to play it at home.

Now you have to subtract the chance that he wants to show off his skills. You end up with something like a three percent chance that because it's a PC software game in the arcade it will turn a player off. There are hundreds of people going through the arcade that are oblivious to the fact that it is a home PC game. All they know is that it's good entertainment.

My philosophy is that good entertainment is good entertainment. If "urassic Park" was made by a French film company, I would still like it. I don't care what kind of projector they use to show the movie, the movie is still good. If it's the same projector I have at home, great. They must have figured out some way to make it this great in the movie theater.

If I spend 50 cents playing a game and I enjoy it, then I'm happy. The only way we will be successful is to make sure that players enjoy their experience. That's the bottom line. It's common to think, with the PC game industry's resources and people, that there is no way dedicated arcade games can compete with that kind of power—the brilliance of George Lucas coming to bear on video products, Star Wars games that will be released. Imagine a state-of-the-art ArcadePC game that would come out about the same time as the software. PC software has gone through such an evolution, and in the last year it's exploded. It's hard to imagine, with the Internet and game graphics, how good PC games are today.

Lance: The big spectrum we see coming down the pike, which will add tremendous value to the whole project, is having it work like the movie industry. A movie is released in the prime movie theaters first. It then trickles through the process of video tapes, then cable TV, and down to the ABC movie of the week. We hope to create a similar avenue so developers will want to release their games into the arcade first to stimulate interest. It will be the game's premier. After a few months in the arcade, players will want to buy it for their home PC.

It's like the arcade industry is upside down versus the movie industry. We hope to see home games come out in the arcade first so it will benefit other people. But right now Sega, Williams, and Namco have a chokehold on that. They sell 20,000 games and wait six months. When they release it to the home they'll sell hundreds of millions of dollars worth of games because everyone has gotten familiar with it.

Are some of the companies you are working with going that route in releasing a PC game?

The big companies will not today. If they delay their release date, they lose millions. With the speed of the PC market they are terrified. But down the road as we get more games out, and because we have an easy way to upgrade our system, we could easily send out a thousand upgrade kits throughout the market and see what happens with the sale of that game. Also a lot of locations are looking to sell PC games, another niche to their market.

Someone looked at our unit and said, "I can see the arcade of the future. You have 40 systems playing 40 different ArcadePC games and a rack of home PC games for sale." Instead of spending $3 at the arcade customers may spend $57. That may be down the road, as arcades make a transition.

Any last words?

It's kind of an interesting combination of events. With the turn of the millennium and the PC movement really coming about, I think we are in the midst of a major industry-wide change. ▲

DECEMBER Play Meter's "What's New" in game history

1978

Features included licensed graphics (with Cheryl Ladd, not Farrah Fawcett) and a bonus multiplier that advanced to 5X by making C-H-I-C or hitting all red drop targets.

1982

To meet demand for the return of *Eight Ball Deluxe* to the arcade scene, Bally introduced its pinball game as *Eight Ball Deluxe—Special Edition*. "It started with *Eight Ball,* which was an initial success," explained the company's Paul Calamari. "But the added features on *Eight Ball Deluxe* just took the arcade by storm."

1988

Gottlieb seemed to like sticking to the feminine subject, this time with *Bad Girls*. This pinball with a pool-playing theme featured a new larger backglass to show the bad girls artwork.

1994

There were lots of ticket redemption games introduced this year. To single one out for the month of December wasn't easy, but one that we still see is *Skee-Ball Lightning*. The company called it "the next generation of redemption roll-up games." It had lots of improvements including a new look, great sound, and unique play features.

1997

Namco's *Rapid River* gave players the ride of their lives in a realistic raft in this high-tech/high-touch simulator. The goal was to get to the end of one of three different routes while watching the action on a 50-inch screen.

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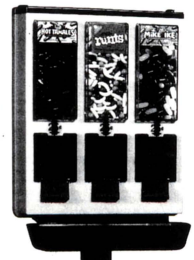

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WILLIAM THEVAOS

I met William and Lane Thevaos a number of years ago at a North Carolina state show, and I saw them at open houses, AMOA, and things like that as the years went by. The last time was at a special dinner in honor of Blair Norris for his many years at Brady Distributing. In fact, it was during a conversation with Blair that William's name came up. Blair said that William would be the perfect operator to interview for Coinman. Blair sure knows how to pick 'em!

William has a keen insight into the industry, and has a knack for putting his thoughts into words that are easy to understand and make us think a little. I owe him a double thanks for the time because, although I hate to admit it, our first interview went great, but my tape recorder bombed, which required another couple of hours to do it over. I swear it was meant to be because I think the second interview went even better.

Give us a brief history of Owl Music.

The business started right after the war, when my dad Theodore started Owl Music and got into the jukebox business. He had some experience from his high school days when he worked for a man who operated pinball machines. Owl Music only had jukeboxes and a few pool tables. In North Carolina pinballs were declared illegal right before the war and stayed that way up until 1966. And that happens to be when I got into the business full-time. Today we are primarily a street operator with a couple of arcades. Most of our locations are bowling centers, skating rinks, bars, and restaurants. The name "Owl" reflects how we feel about our service—we're up all night!

My partner now is my wife Lane who runs our office. Without her expertise in this area, I would not be able to focus on the operation side of the business.

You obviously grew up in the business. As your wife Lane explained to me, she had to tell your kids you didn't go to kindergarten because you were working! But seriously, do you think the industry's image has changed since your dad's days?

It's changed a whole lot for the better. Now we are considered more of a legitimate business. I remember riding around with my dad in the truck going for tools or changing records in jukeboxes, and although it's not like we were looked at as bad people really, we just didn't have the kind of professional image we have today. The public perceived us as a secret society-type of business. We operated in cash, and everything was hush-hush. Business and your operation were not discussed in the open. Based on my experience, operators did not want to share information because they were afraid someone would use it against them. It was just a different type of business.

–by Valerie Cognevich

Coinman

WILLIAM THEVAOS

What would you cite as the main difference now?

The industry is more business-oriented. In other words, we know that we have to be better informed to make better decisions about our businesses. We've had to diversify, and we have a lot more invested. The equipment is more expensive, and you can't afford to make purchases without knowing the business. We're also operating a lot more games. Someone who's been in the business a long time may have been operating 50 or 75 jukeboxes in the early days, but is now operating 800 to1,000 games. Having that much equipment requires more preparation; the whole business procedure changes. Everything has to be in order. All the i's have to be dotted and the t's crossed.

You can't operate by the seat of your pants. The government is making it harder to conduct business, so it's even more important to stay on top of new regulations. Our business becomes even more complicated because we have so many items. It's time-consuming. We spend a lot more time in-house taking care of the operation. Internally, you need two or three people just to handle the paperwork.

Do your locations expect more from you?

They do expect a lot, but by showing them that we provide good service, we've turned it around to where we are more valuable to them than they are to us. We can even be more selective in which locations we choose to work with.

Do you use contracts?

We try to use them a lot more than we did years ago. My father really never had to deal with contracts. That's another way that I feel we are becoming more professional. While the locations expect a lot from us, we have high expectations from our locations. Instead of rolling a jukebox in a location and coming back to collect the money, we have to make sure that our locations understand what we are offering and what we have invested in them. We are much more open and up-front with our locations than probably my dad was in the days when everything was so secretive. Although we don't lay everything on the table, we want to make sure our customers know that we have a substantial investment in them.

As a street operator in this day and age, what are your major concerns?

The number one concern has to be the equipment. We must continuously come up with new and better games to keep our customers happy, while at the same time we must get a decent return on investment.

"Their expectations are high. We have to do something to get their attention. We need more, new, and different."

Are locations more demanding?

I think everyone just expects more than ever. We're on the cutting edge of communication, among other things, and people are so aware of what is going on throughout the country. There was a time when we could buy a new piece of equipment and shuffle it down the line to lower-end locations, and they thought they had a new game. Although we still do it to a small degree, everyone is more knowledgeable of what's out there in the entertainment field. They expect more because they hear about what's new and know all about it. They don't necessarily hear it from the operators, they hear it from the home market promotions and games.

What about the selection of equipment?

It's getting tougher and tougher. It seems like every time we finally get something great, like a *Daytona*, they're already asking, "What's next?" It's harder to satisfy people. After a good game, we have to follow it up with something even better. I don't know where technology is going to lead us, but one thing is for sure, we can't spend for one game what used to be our whole budget for equipment. We must be able to run lower-end games or possibly find some new type of equipment to increase our bottom line.

Another thing about video games is that I'm not sure where we're headed with the violence. If you don't want to operate violent games, basically your selection is even worse. What you have left is drivers.

A family gathering for William's 50th birthday, (l-r): William II, William Sr., Lane, and Bret.

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Coinman

WILLIAM THEVAOS

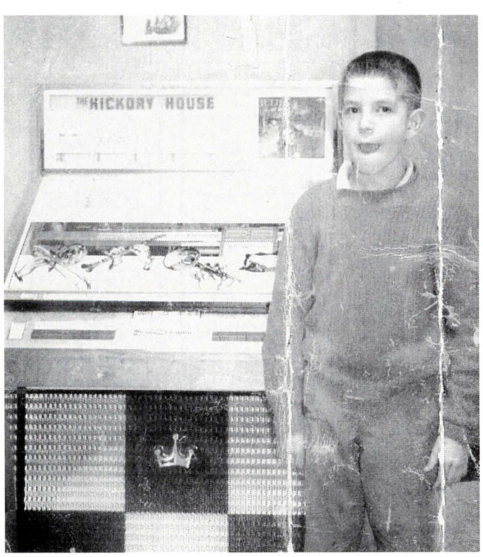
Here's William today by a 1955 Seeburg that his dad actually operated.

How do you feel about the violence?

I select games more now based on the content than I used to. I'm much more aware. We are starting to get faxes from locations who have had comments from their customers about a particularly violent game. I don't call it complaining exactly, they'll just call and say they want something else. We are heading more in that direction. As we are rating games as an industry, and I understand we're doing it ourselves for our own benefit so the government doesn't do it for us, I hope we continue to be smart.

I was just thinking of a flyer I was reading on one of the new games. The game is obviously violent and bloody, but the flyer explains that you can turn off certain portions of the game as far as the blood and guts scenario. That's good in one way, but I don't know how that's going to work. I'm not saying you have to have blood and guts to make money, but if someone sees that game somewhere else, and they come and play it in your location and it's different, they might feel cheated. You lose your edge. It's a great thought, but not everyone is going to turn the gore off. Players are expecting certain game play. Even with options, the play appeal is based on certain things. When you cut back on that, the game will lose its appeal and its players.

Here's William at age 13 by a 1961 Seeburg. Note the name on it. Often operators would put the location's name on the jukebox.



Do you think the ArcadePC initiative will help in getting a larger selection of games?

We are running the Incredible Technologies' tournaments. It's made me realize that especially with video games, we are going to have to offer our players more of this. Players want competition, and they are not going to play the games today like they used to. The continued success is going to be linking games, networking, and having tournaments. If the ArcadePC is going to offer us a selection of games that we will be able to network and offer challenging competition, then I say it's going to help us an industry.

We can play our *Golden 3D Golf* here in Charlotte and compete against a guy in California or New York. It would be in our best interest to offer players what they seem to want. Plus, I think that more people who may not play games would be drawn to competition with tournaments. It's not just the games anymore; players want more. If we stay on that competitive promotion track, operators will be able to get more legs out of games.

I was thinking of our area. If we had 10 locations, we could hook them all up and have tournaments on video games, even countertops. I think Merit has that capability. That's where we need to go. That's the reason *Golden Tee Golf* took off like it did. There was nothing like it, and it certainly gave us a look into the future of what our players are going to be expecting.

When I was thinking about networking and competition among players, I had an idea. Instead of having large arcades, maybe have five or six locations with five or six games so players could compete. You could actually have a continuing tournament in these locations, whether the location was a bowling center, a skating rink, a restaurant, or whatever. They'd all have the same games hooked up to promote tournaments.

We can't forget that most of the kids today have grown up with computers, which are second nature to them. In fact, even 20-year-olds are more aware of getting on a computer. We must be a step ahead of them in understanding what they are looking for when they leave their homes. Their expectations are high. We have to do something to get their attention. We need more, new, and different.

I look at what we have in product today, and I want to ask the manufacturers, "What are you doing?" I know it's getting harder for them, but we still need games. If you've been around for awhile, would you have ever thought 20 years ago that we'd have all we have now? But we can't stop.

Do you consider home games a threat to the coin-op industry?

It's taken a bite out of our business, but I don't think it's ever going to destroy it. People just don't want to stay at home all the time. Operators who have defined their niche and do a good job are not as worried about it. If they run a professional business, the home market isn't something we should be scared about. We should be attentive to what is going on around us. I don't think we really cared years ago what was really going on. We are more vulnerable now, as are other businesses, because of the advances in technology. You can't be in North Carolina doing your own thing. You have to know what's going on all over the country.

Since video is not your only prod-

Coinman

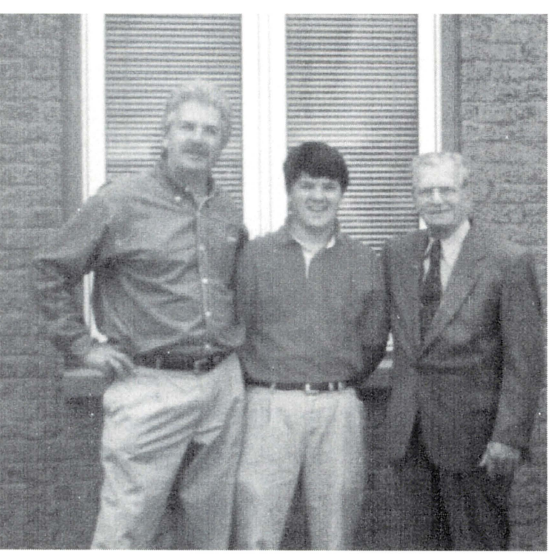
WILLIAM THEVAOS

uct, what other types of equipment are earning well for you?

We had a lull with cranes, but we're doing very well with them again, especially candy cranes and beanie baby cranes. The pinballs are slow, but we're seriously thinking about adding some sticker machines. They look like they'll give us a good return on investment. There's a variety of locations where I'm sure they'll work. Of course, pool tables and jukeboxes are steady.

When the CD jukeboxes came out it educated us. We learned to up our percentages. We had made deals that may not have been the best for us as business people. But with something new it was the perfect opportunity to ask for minimums and get a greater percentage. Again, as I said before, we are much more open. We'd talk to our locations about how much we were investing, not only in the jukebox but in the CDs as well. At the same time, we also stressed what we could do for them. Before, there wasn't a lot to do with the jukebox. With the technology of CDs we could offer things like background music, better quality, better sound, and more. Even though the jukebox part of our route is down a little now, I think it will begin to cycle back up. Jukeboxes are a mainstay if you keep an eye on your CDs and get a minimum.

Three generations, (l-r): William, his son Bret, and father Theodore.



Speaking of jukeboxes, have you been looking into adding digitally downloaded jukeboxes to your product mix?

We have been shown how it works. It's interesting, and the concept is good. The problem today is that the music industry is a little soft. On the other hand, maybe because it's soft, it's ready to take the next step, and that just may be digital downloaded music.

I don't think, though, that operators want someone else in their locations. That's what it amounts to. I understand they'll lease you the jukebox, won't charge you anything for using it, and they'll download it on a regular basis. But that's giving them more control over a location than I'd like. Plus the contract, I'm just not comfortable with the idea. The concept seems good—they explain how you can invest your money somewhere else because you aren't purchasing the equipment, you don't have CDs to buy, and don't have to worry about service. All that is great, but I don't know that our relationship with the company is quite where it needs to be.

What would it take for you to get comfortable with it?

My biggest problem is how much they will know about my locations. We have to protect our location list. It seems like everyone today sells lists, and I'd have to be assured, have some kind of agreement, or maybe even go a step further, whatever that might be, that no one would see that list. I also don't like the idea that once the contract is up, they could still be there and make a deal with the location. We have to stay in control of our locations. I'm not sure that I'd want another company telling us what we have to do. We don't necessarily make all the right decisions, but enter another party and it's like a partnership where you make a decision and the partner has his own ideas. Then who knows? I hate to sound negative because I don't have a problem with the technology. In fact, I can see it being the next step in jukeboxes. But in my mind the relationship with the company has to be different.

"There was a time when we could buy a new piece of equipment and shuffle it down the line to lower-end locations, and they thought they had a new game."

There's been a lot of campaigning for a new dollar coin. Now that one is coming, do you think it will have a positive impact on our industry?

From my experience I don't think people are going to stop using the dollar bill. I went through the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin era, and I would relate this to that experience. What's going to be different? What's going to happen here? We are in the entertainment business. Maybe we'll have to make sure people use them in vending or another area so people get used to them, and it may spill over into our industry.

There's a lot involved in trying to persuade people to use a new coin in games. I'm not so sure that our society is ready to accept a dollar coin. It's not going to be an easy sell. With the familiar dollar bill still handy, people will tend to use it as they do now.

What kind of relationship do you have with your competition?

I don't have a lot of competition, and we get along well. As I mentioned before, all of us are more professional, and the business is more professional. We don't try to undermine each other. We've learned not to give our business away, and we're not going to tell a location we'll offer more than the competition. I remember years ago, if someone offered a location a 50/50 split on a jukebox, someone else would come along and say, "Well, maybe we'll give you a little more." We don't do that. Another thing that is important to me is that we have gained respect. We lost it years ago when things were done under the table in the guise of darkness. Now, we'll give the location owner a sales pitch,

Coinman

WILLIAM THEVAOS

telling him what we can do for him. We sell ourselves, we don't put down the competition.

One thing I have to say though is that business is very good in Charlotte. We have professional football and basketball that we didn't have 20 years ago. Charlotte is growing, and businesses are coming in. I'm sure there are areas in the country that are not doing so well right now. We're fortunate to have a very good market. We aren't wonder kids, although we do a good job! But we have a lot of opportunities right now. But I saw them coming. Like I said, you have to be aware of what's going on. Being more business oriented, we have to keep up with what's going on much more so than my father did when I was growing up. Another thing I'm finding is that you have to actively sell. We're past the days of waiting for customers to come to us.

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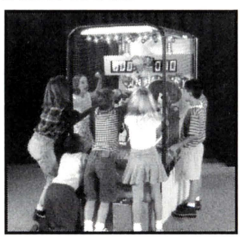
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CE UL LISTED

Is the Internet playing a significant role in your business?

My first thought is to say no, but as I think about it, maybe it is playing a bigger role. I do review it, look up information, send e-mails, and check Web sites for equipment. I haven't done any business over the Internet, but I can see that coming in the future. I think we are going to have to look for alternatives to get information, and the Internet is the best way. You can find answers to a lot of questions on the Internet. It's getting harder to talk to people. Everyone has answering machines and voice mail. You can actually get on the computer and get information faster than reaching a real person. I am continually surprised about what's there. And it's going to be even more. But you can spend a lot of time on it. I relate it to darts. If you've ever played, you know that you start out throwing a few darts, and before you know it a couple of hours have passed.

Most operators know what they are looking for and what products make money for them. There are not so many products out there that we can't keep up with what's new. I got a letter from a manufacturer today about its latest product. If I'm interested I'll call in my order to the distributor. They take orders, but they don't sell like maybe they had to do at one time. So why shouldn't we go online to see what the deals are and who's got what? I think we're going to be ordering product a lot differently than we do now. I'm certainly not saying we should get rid of local distributors; that's not part of my problem.

How do you see the role of the distributor in our industry right now?

As far as technical support, I view them as very important. Again, I have some good distributors. I've never dealt

with a bad distributor, although there may be some out there somewhere in other parts of the country. But I deal with Brady, Operators Distributing, and Green Coin, and all have been wonderful. But as we are able to communicate better with the manufacturers and are able to get more information, I just don't know where it could lead. I'm not sure that these people are as available as they used to be. When you need technical assistance, distributors are good as gold. They'll help you and back up everything they sell. But getting to the people you need to talk to is harder. I called today, for instance, and wanted to talk to someone about a Merit countertop. Well, one guy's at lunch and the other guy is doing something else. So I called Merit, which has a technical assistant. We're at that level now. We can work on the boards and get more done going directly to the manufacturer.

Do you go to trade shows? And what do you get out of them?

We just go to the AMOA, which we've been attending for about 10 years. We go to see new equipment, but it's also a fun time for us. We treat it as a vacation-type scenario. We do business and have a little enjoyment. We used to look at it as a lot more fun, but I understand that the manufacturers are cutting expenses for one reason or another. But it's not as valuable to have a show if there's not a lot of hype. All the vendors are nice, but as you walk up and down the aisles, I'm just not sure how enthused they are. They don't have the attitude and hype you saw in year's past.

An advantage to shows is finding out what's going on in other states. I mentioned earlier that we have to be alert and know what's going on, and a trade show is the perfect chance to get that information.

Why are you a member of AMOA and your state association?

AMOA, on the national level, represents our industry and lobbies. But it also keeps our integrity up, and, having a professional organization, our industry is recognized as reputable and professional. It's to our advantage to support a national association.

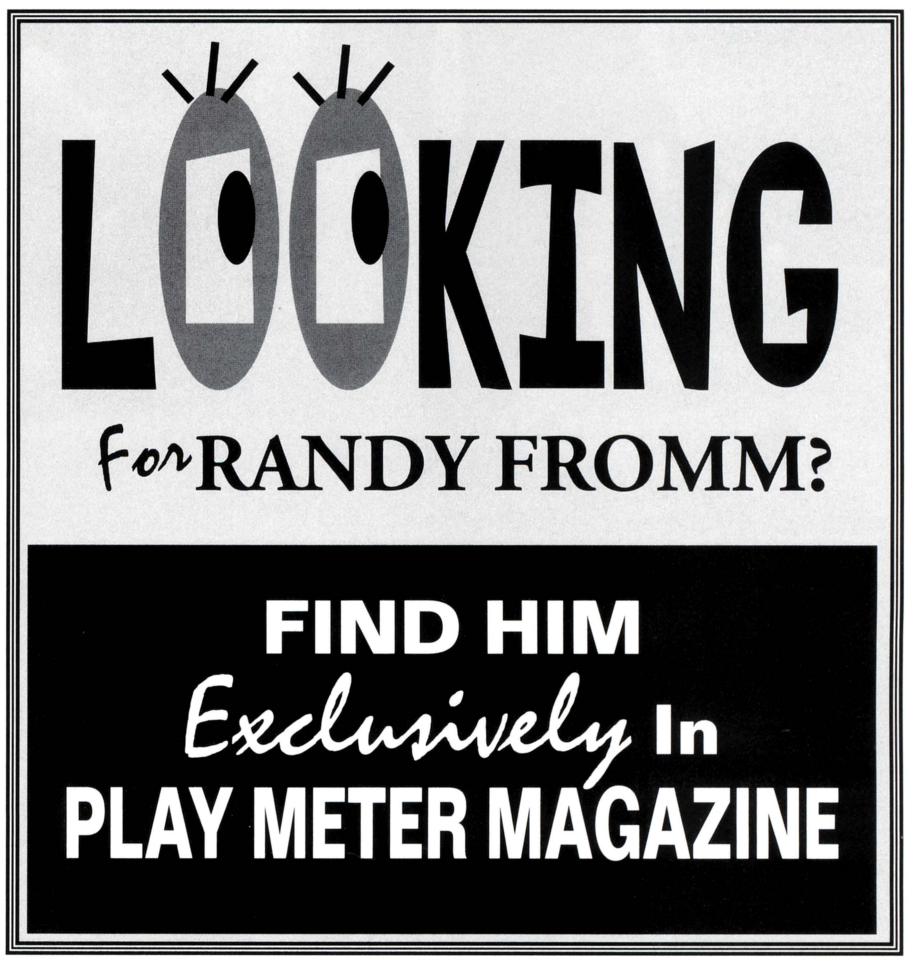
As far as a state association, it's probably even more important. What happens at the state level affects us more than most things that happen at the federal level. It's real important to act as a unified body and know what the laws are and what issues affect us. I don't operate cigarette machines, but in North Carolina tobacco is big industry. The state association kept track of what was going on and kept us informed. They communicated with us through newsletters and phone calls.

Poker machines are a continuing issue, and the board will address issues as they come up. It's great knowing that you can pick up the phone and find out what's going on. We have a good strong organization. They encourage everyone to participate.

With everything that's going on in the industry right now, what do you think are the major changes since your father's day?

"We know that we have to be better informed to make better decisions about our businesses."

He always comments that we should have stayed small. Of course, I have to explain to him that we would have been swallowed if we hadn't diversified and grown. Today you can't just operate jukeboxes or pool tables. Some try to operate only poker machines but that's a little different. The industry has progressed to such a point that you have to be widespread. You have to carry a bunch of items. It's a bigger, more complicated industry than it was in the '50s. If you can't get four or five items for your customers, they'll find someone else who can. You can't establish a mainline business only offering a few items. Think big! ▲



GUEST
COMMENTARY

The future looks BRIGHT

In October we featured Midway Games on our cover and an interview with executive vice president and general manager Ken Fedesna. However, he had lots more to say so we have included his comments on the future of the coin-op industry in this guest commentary.

This is a time of change for the coin-op game industry, filled with exciting new developments and challenges. In fact, I can't think of a time during my 21 years in the industry when there has been this much promise on the horizon. Over the next two to three years, advancements in game and network technology are going to allow manufacturers to introduce a variety of innovative game products that will amaze players and cause a surge in the popularity of coin-op.

However, we need to work together as an industry to make sure these products get the exposure and market penetration they deserve. We need to change the way we work together—manufacturers, distributors, operators, locations, and players—in order to grow coin-op to a dominant position in the entertainment culture.

Why am I so optimistic about the future? One of the things I like best about my job is seeing games during development. Anyone who has any concern about the future of coin-op simply needs to walk down the halls of the Midway and Williams/Bally engineering department to get excited about the prospects for the future. Video games currently in development feature stunning, realistic graphics and ultra-fast game play that will significantly enhance the player's experience to levels well beyond current products.

Pinball, which has long been a core element of the industry, is currently being redesigned utilizing advanced technology. The new technology, Pinball 2000, combines the appeal of classic flipper pinball with the latest technology. It will amaze current pinball players, and we expect it to attract a whole new audience. Pinball 2000

is scheduled for release in early 1999, and it may incite a surge of popularity for pinball similar to what we experienced when *Space Shuttle* was introduced in 1985.

Beyond advancements in game technology, there are new opportunities in linked games. We've been testing our Wavenet system over the past six months in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. This system allows for real-time video game competition at multiple geographic locations. I could be on a *San Francisco Rush* game in Chicago racing against opponents in Los Angeles and San Francisco, for example. Although the test is still in progress, there is one conclusion that is coming through loud and clear: linking games and allowing multilocation competition increases earnings.

Time for a change

However, I must issue a word of caution: We won't fully enjoy the potential of these new products and technologies unless we improve the way we operate as an industry. We have developed some bad habits. Manufacturers collectively over the past few years have not been introducing the level of innovative products necessary to keep players' attention. Many distributors and operators have become very conservative in their purchases, which has made it very difficult for the good games to get to players. Most locations are not even aware of new products that could increase their coin-op revenue and even pull new players into their establishments. We need to change our behavior industry-wide in order to really take advantage of new opportunities.

Some of the changes I'd like to see include manufacturers realizing that they must invest in the research and development of exciting, cost effective, reliable game products. At Midway we will spend in excess of $50 million on coin-op game engineering and development this coming year. At Williams/Bally, we are spending millions more on the development of the Pinball 2000 technology.

On the next level, distributors must take the initiative and prudent financial risk to work with the manufacturers and their operator customers to provide the value-added services of product availability, financing, education and product training, repair parts availability, and product knowledge and testing.

willing to take the risk to purchase and place this new equipment in both old and new locations. He needs to rotate this equipment to maximize earnings at a particular location, and must keep the equipment in good working order. It is also the job of the manufacturer and distributor to support the operator and help make him successful in these endeavors.

To help the operator maximize this

"Anyone who has any concern about the future of coin-op simply needs to walk down the halls of the Midway and Williams/Bally engineering department to get excited about the prospects for the future."

At Midway and Williams/Bally, we believe we must not only support the distributor in carrying out his role by providing top-earning, reliable game products, but we must also conduct product knowledge, service and sale technique schools, provide sales and services tools, make available in a timely fashion spare and repair parts, and when necessary become involved with financing support. To help provide each, we are in the process of creating a real-time Internet information network which will be able to provide our distributors with the information they need to fulfill their role and support their customers. This includes product knowledge information, game order and delivery status, spare and repair parts ordering, repair and service information, product availability, and earning and test information.

On the third level, the operator needs to search out and identify what new equipment is available, understand how it works, and what potential it might have to provide a good return on investment for him. He must be

profit potential, Midway is making a concerted effort to go out and meet operators at their base of operations to try to better understand what they need in equipment and support for such. We will continue to conduct operator information exchange meetings both in the field and at our factory. We will also be setting up over the Internet an Operator e-mail Information Exchange site as well as conduct a live operator "chat" site to provide another source of communication between our company's management and the operator community.

Next, locations need to work with their operators to identify and place the best equipment in their establishments that will provide entertainment for the player and additional income for the location, while at the same time enabling the operator to make a good return on his investment. To accomplish this, manufacturers, distributors, operators, and location owners need to work together and understand each other's needs.

At Midway, by traveling with the

distributor and the operator visiting various locations, we are attempting to better understand what type of products can make a difference in maximizing the locations' game revenues. We also are continuing to search out the best available licensed themes that will bring players into the locations to play our games. As proven in the past, picking the right license and integrating it properly into the game's design can have tremendous player draw to that game and the location.

Home games

We don't view home video as competition for coin-op. We compete against other forms of entertainment out of the home. The success of home video games signifies the overall popularity of video games with players, and we continue searching out new ways to draw the home player to coin-op games. With our new *NFL Blitz '99* product, we are providing the home player of the Nintendo 64 version of the original *NFL Blitz* the opportunity to design plays at home, save these to a memory device, and then enter those plays in a card reader in the coin-op *NFL Blitz '99* game. Every consumer version of the original *NFL Blitz* will also contain an advertisement for the *NFL Blitz '99* coin-op game. Through this unique play design feature and consumer advertising, we believe we will be able to increase the coin-operated *NFL Blitz '99* game revenues significantly.

We often hear that there are not enough fun games. I feel the player can take a part in ensuring there are such games. The player is an important part of the process. He must demand fun and exciting games to play. He must demand games that provide a low cost, entertaining experience. He must demand games that are in good working order and are readily available. He must demand games that provide him a unique experience he can't get at home. He must demand games that provide him a means to "show off" his player skills against computer or human opponents, and be rewarded for his skill.

It's our job—manufacturers, distributors, operators, and locations—to provide the player all that he demands. At Midway we are doing everything possible to meet player demands at the manufacturer level.

It's not going to be easy, but we've done it before, and we'll do it again. We have assembled some of the world's most successful designers in our company. Our designers have created games like *Defender, Robotron, Spy Hunter, Joust, Cruis'n USA , Cruis'n World, Space Shuttle, High Speed, Addams Family, Mortal Kombat I, II, III,* and *IV, Area 51, San Francisco Rush, NBA Jam,* and *NFL Blitz.* Our company has committed its resources to fully support these designers on their coin-op game design endeavors. We have built an environment in which these designers have the freedom and motivational support to create the types of games the player is demanding. I am confident that we will continue to make the great games this industry is searching for.

The outlook has never been better for coin-op, but we all—manufacturers, distributors, operators, and players—need to work together to make it happen. We can't allow any barriers between us. We need to join forces to bring this industry back to the forefront of the entertainment universe. We need to start listening to each other, try to understand what each is searching for, and work together to create what everyone seeks. It's not one perfect product that's going to solve all our problems. It's not one manufacturer, distributor, operator, location, or player that's going to make a significant difference all by themselves. However, it is all of these groups together that can make the difference and can develop into that which we all are really searching for. We all need each other, and together we can make it happen. Let's get started. Together we will find a world of opportunity. ▲

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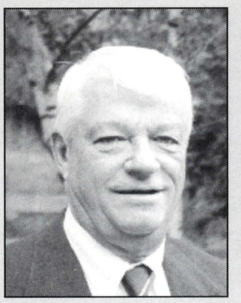

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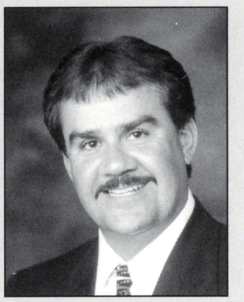
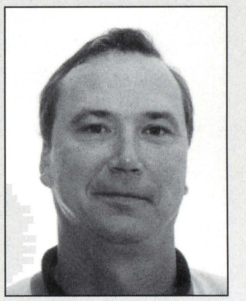
Williamson's Sugar Loaf Amusement
Winona, MN



R. Steve Pullen
Atlas Distributing, Inc.
Louisville, KY



Mickey Starks
Northwest Coin Machine
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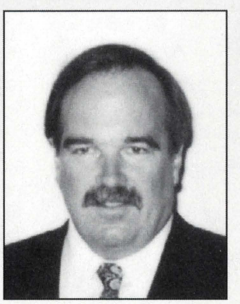
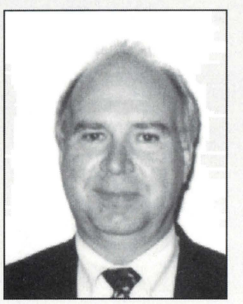
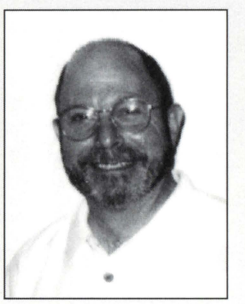


Alan Deutschmann
A.L.D. Services, Inc.
St. Charles, MO



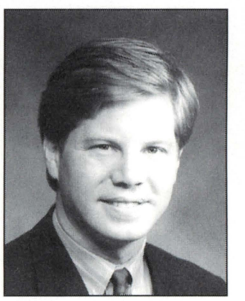
John Pascaretti
Wolverine American, Inc.
Redford, MI



Steve Koenigsberg
State Sales & Service Corp.
Baltimore, MD

Kay Jackson
American Vending Co., Inc.
East Point, GA

Russell Mawdsley
Russell-Hall, Inc.
Holyoke, MA



Andy Shaffer
Shaffer Services
Columbus, OH

AMOA
Amusement & Music Operators Association

Prize Promotions

JIM McCORMICK

a new system for tournament redemption

PRIZE PROMOTIONS GIVES OPERATORS THE CHANCE TO OFFER PRIZE MERCHANDISE TO THE WINNERS OF TOURNAMENTS AND TO INCREASE REVENUE ON MACHINES THEY ALREADY OWN BY GETTING PLAYERS, ATTRACTED BY THE COMPETITION AND AWARDING OF PRIZES, TO COME BACK OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

Winners receive Prize Promotions award certificates.

Through the Prize Promotions system, tournament winners are able to choose, and redeem with prize certificates, merchandise from the Prize Promotions catalog, which is to be left at each participating location. This removes the operator's burden of having to find and stock prizes.

"Rick Caviglia and I have been doing this for maybe 18 months," said Joe DeMatteo, who, along with Caviglia owns Prize Promotions. Both men are themselves operators. "Somewhere around June we actually incorporated the business so we could turn it over to other operators." Caviglia had been developing the idea for about two years before he and DeMatteo put it into practice on their own routes.

Prize Promotions' policy is to support operators, and the company asserts that it will not distribute its system to location owners. "One of the things we wanted to avoid, and we stress this to a lot of the operators, is that this is not something that we want to sell to a bar owner," said DeMatteo. "One of the most powerful things we found in the beginning is that a bar owner sees that you're making real good money on a countertop game, and he says, 'Oh I'm just gonna buy my own!' We're not in business to sell to bar owners. We just want to sell to operators."

DeMatteo said that the system works on some of the old games as well as the newer games. "*Golden Tee Golf* is one of those games, and it's perfect for this. It also does exceptionally well with countertop games. It doesn't seem to matter much which countertop game, it will work on all of them.

The third category is basically anything that will retain a resettable high score, such as the pinball machines, some gun games, and driving games."

Golden Tee Golf manufacturer Incredible Technologies now offers to its tournament accounts that are online the choice of Prize Promotions points certificates for their in-house players. In keeping with DeMatteo's loyalty to operators, operators must request the system for the particular *Golden Tee Golf* tournament location.

"We've only tried it so far with the *MegaTouch* countertop, so we haven't done as much with it yet as we want to," said operator Janet Stansfield Hess of Stansfield Vending in Lacrosse, Wis., who has been using the program for the last three to four months. "Another natural progression is the *Golden Tee Golf,* especially the tournament games. The other one that we are thinking about trying is pinball, which is sometimes a tough category to get the revenue up on."

Stansfield continued, "Just like anything, it's something we are trying to find the best utilization for. I don't think it's appropriate in every single location no matter what. You have to figure out what works best in your area."

DeMatteo suggested that one effective method of using Prize Promotions is to run tournaments on more than one kind of game in a particular location, allowing players of different types of games to participate in competitions in a sort of cross-promotional atmosphere. "When you run Prize Promotions on your countertop, and then you run it on a pool table, a pinball, or the *Golden Tee Golf,* you get fantastic response because it opens the whole bar up to more players," he said.

According to Caviglia, increases in revenue of 65 percent have almost been commonplace among those operators who follow through with the promotional instructions that Prize Promotions provides them. Most shortcomings in revenue enhancement, says Caviglia, are a result of operators not reading the eight-page manual, not telling their location owners and bar tenders that this system is now in place, and not leaving catalogs with each of the locations.

While Prize Promotion does account for all certificates that are sent out of the office, they leave subsequent regulation up to the operators.

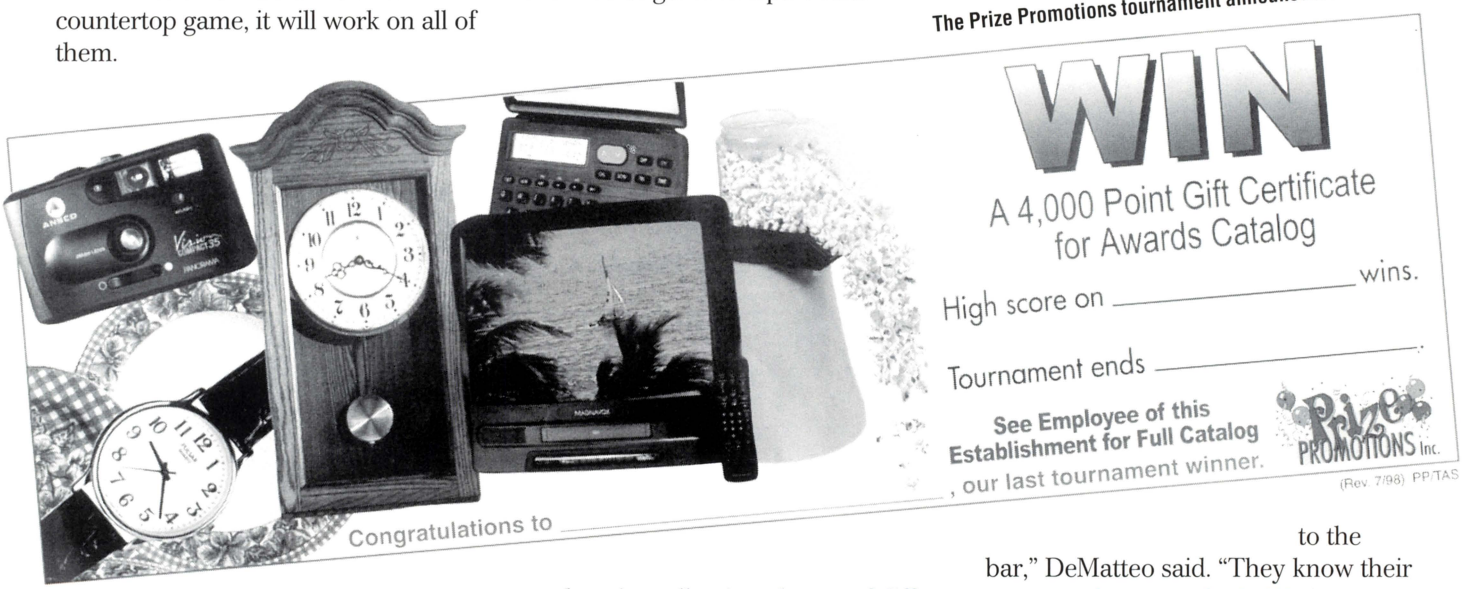
"We issue these certificates out of our offices as if they were travelers checks," said DeMatteo, citing how this allows winning patrons to combine points certificates they have won from two or three different locations in order to redeem prizes of greater value. "The certificates are as good as cash."

"We don't verify the actual winners; we turn that over to the bar," DeMatteo said. "They know their customer base; we don't. We have some safeguards here at the office and some security checks on the certificate itself. Each one has a serial number that is in our computers, and we can see that it was actually issued."

DeMatteo told *Play Meter* that manufacturers have been very supportive of the Prize Promotions system, given that more income means that operators will be able to pay off current machines and afford new ones.

"Merit's Peter Furer was directly involved with this. He flew out to Los Angeles one day, we met about Prize Promotions, and he jumped aboard,"

The Prize Promotions tournament announcement sheet.


WIN
A 4,000 Point Gift Certificate for Awards Catalog
High score on _____ wins.
Tournament ends _____.
See Employee of this Establishment for Full Catalog
Congratulations to _____, our last tournament winner.
Prize PROMOTIONS Inc.
(Rev. 7/98) PP/TAS

DeMatteo said. "Then Jim Roe and Dave Palmer, and all of Merit's sales reps have packages available. Their basic goal in this thing is to get operators to make more money because they know they're going to sell more games."

According to DeMatteo another advantage to the way Prize Promotions has set up its system is the needlessness of the operator's presence at tournaments.

"The beauty of the system is that the tournament has the ability to run all by itself because the machine keeps the high score," DeMatteo said. "The only thing operators need to do is add about five minutes to their collection time. So when we come in on collection day, we pop the high scores off onto the certificate, take a few notes, reset the high scores, start a new game, drop the package off to the bar, and we're gone. There is a very minimal amount of time involved for the operator."

Operator Steve Fisher of Datascore in the state of Washington, has been using the system now for about two months. Fisher confirmed DeMatteo's assertions of convenience for the operator. "It's obvious to us that Prize Promotions is going to save us a lot of time and give the customers more to choose from once they know that it's really there."

The cost of the prize package is deducted first, and then the operator and location split the money from the game. "We sell the package for $25, and that includes the 4,000 points," DeMatteo said. "A lot of operators ask who pays for the prize, but the prize is included in that, shipping and handling too. Operators don't have to do anything except take that $25 off the top of the collection, then do their split. Some operators have chosen to charge $30 for the package, but that's left up to them."

"Generally we try to keep our prizes down to 10 percent of the income," Fisher told *Play Meter,* "and at the $25 price that works out for most of our machines."

"Jim Hayes from Gem Music, a very big operator, buys these packages a hundred at a time," DeMatteo said. "He has hundreds of countertop games, and for every tournament that you decide to run, you can run a package on it."

Most of merchandise so far redeemed from Prize Promotions has been low- to middle-range items, although one woman has already redeemed for the 30-inch Whirlpool gas range.

DeMatteo explained, "What we're seeing currently in redemption is some of the lower-end stuff because most of our operators have only had the product for maybe one or two months. So of course we get the guys who say, 'Well give me the clock radio light. I'll take that.' We are going to begin to see a lot of the higher-end stuff moving, but it will take some time before winners have saved up points."

Being the new company that it is, Prize Promotions has yet to prove itself over a long period of time. But the enthusiasm of operators we spoke to who are using the system translates into an opportunity for the company to create a strong presence in the tournament prize redemption market.

"We're experimenting with it," Stansfield said, "but we're really excited that someone is paying attention to the revenue-enhancement side of our industry. I've seen so much publicity about equipment, that it's nice to have someone pay attention to the quarter end and try to help operators pay for their equipment more quickly."

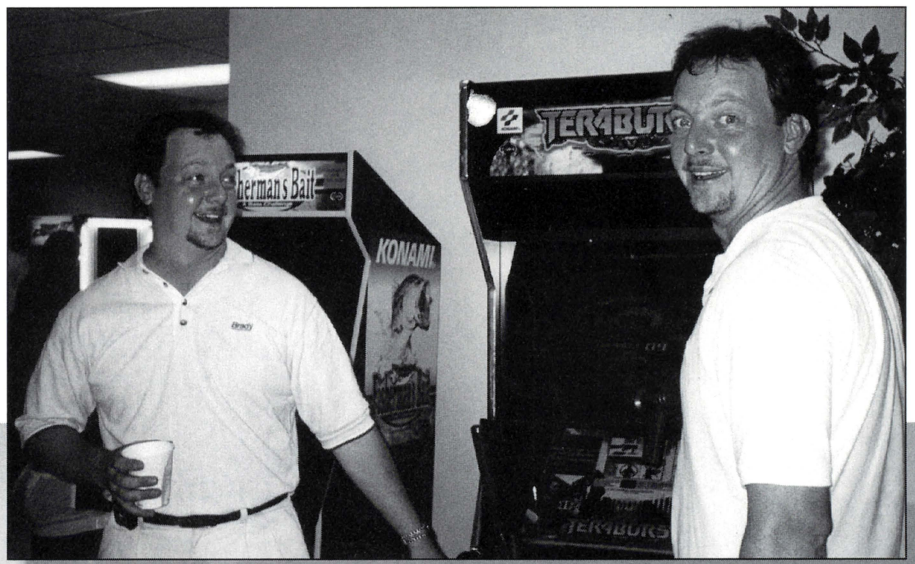
"The majority of the locations like the idea, but I honestly think it will take a few more months to evaluate," Fisher said. "It will probably take four to six months for people to get used to the idea that there's a catalog. I think it's just going to take time for people to recognize what it is. That's why we're going to stick with it."

According to Stansfield, DeMatteo himself has been extremely helpful and accessible to Stansfield Vending in its efforts to implement the Prize Promotions system. "I am extremely impressed with Joe," Stansfield told P*lay Meter.* "I can say that I would endorse him highly if operators wanted to consult specifically about their routes and locations. I spent over an hour on the phone with him one day, which I thought was great investment of his time into my business." ▲

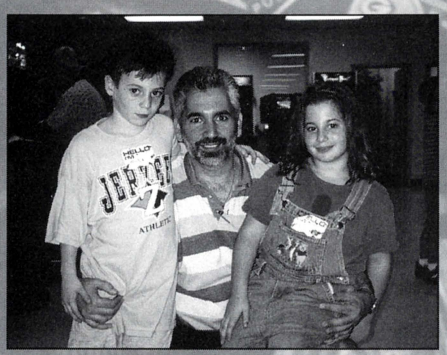
OPEN HOUSE

Brady in Orlando welcomes guests

Florida operators gravitated to the Brady Distributing/Orlando post-AMOA open house recently to see the latest in new games and capitalize on an opportunity to network with their peers. Family members had ample time to try out the newest releases as well. Brady staff was on hand to meet and greet attendees and explain the finer points of the equipment. ▲



You're not seeing double: it's Dave Sexton (l) and his twin brother Chris by Konami's *Fisherman's Bait* and *Teraburst*.



George Asbate of Playtime Entertainment with his children, Mike and Emily.

From left: Tim Paukner of Brady/Orlando, Joe Hansen of Tampa Lanes, and Margie Hunter of Brady/Orlando.

Marty Mann Smith of SNK Corp. of America smiles as young players sample *Beast Busters: Second Nightmare*.

OPEN HOUSE

STATE SALES HOSTS *trio of events*

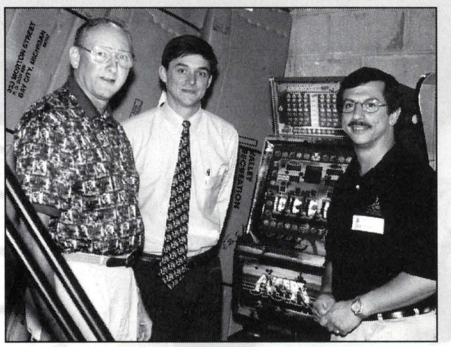
Operators on the East Coast had not one but three chances to evaluate product at State Sales and Service offices in Baltimore, Md., Bensalem, Pa., and Springfield, N.J.

About 400 guests came to Baltimore for a Sunday Family Open House. Operators and their families enjoyed a cookout, new equipment, and a few surprises. They could get up close with the Rowe *Starburst* jukebox, Bally *Monster Bash* pinball, Atari's *Site 4* video, and Midway's *TouchMaster* countertop and *NFL Blitz '99* video.

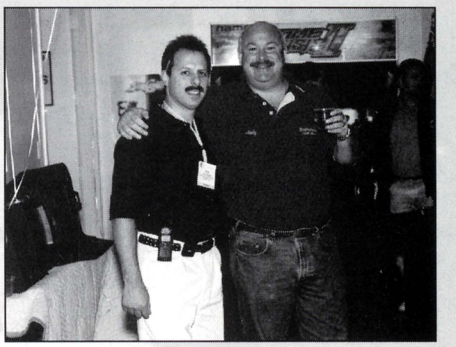
In Bensalem nearly 40 operating companies and 200 guests stopped by. Factory representatives and sales support staff from Baltimore were also on hand. Product highlights included new gun games, CD jukeboxes from NSM and Rock-Ola, *Megatouch* software from Merit, the *Concorde 2* countertop from JVL, Incredible Technologies' *Virtual Pool* video, and Sega Pinball's *Godzilla* pin. In addition, deluxe games from Sega, Konami, and Namco were available to play.

In Springfield, the newest State Sales office, operators came to see new product and renew relationships. State Sales president Steve Koenigsberg commented that he was "thrilled to meet so many enthusiastic customers". The next open house will be a Grand Opening at a new Carteret, N.J., facility. ▲

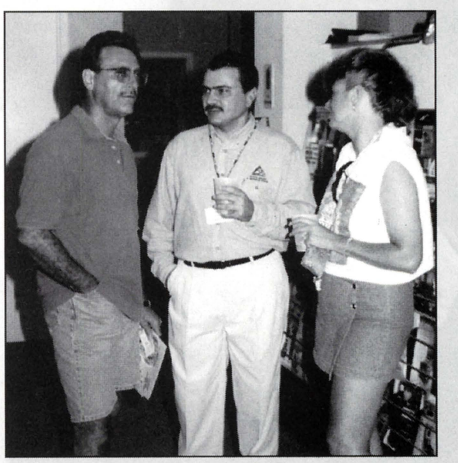
In basic black, the State Sales staff, (l-r): Steve Koenigsberg, Gerry Boyle, Bud Burke, Chris Vecchione, P.J. Mastracchio, and Nick Sarioglou.



In Springfield, N.J., (l-r): Roger Braken of Funmania, Ken Haag of American Alpha, and Jack Guarnieri of State Sales by American Alpha's *Desert Storm* and Smart's *Bean Bag Buddies*.



Also in Springfield: Pete Bonadonna (l) of State Sales and Andy Diamond of Diamond's Leisure World.



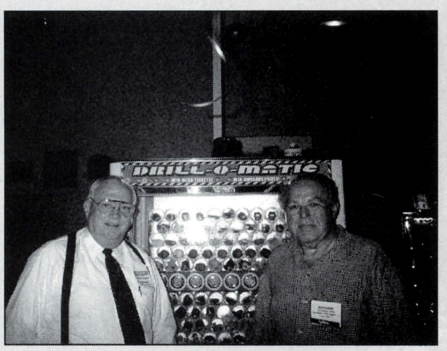
From left in Bensalem: Steve Prince of S & S Coin, Nick DiSebastiano of State Sales, and Mrs. Prince.

OPEN HOUSE

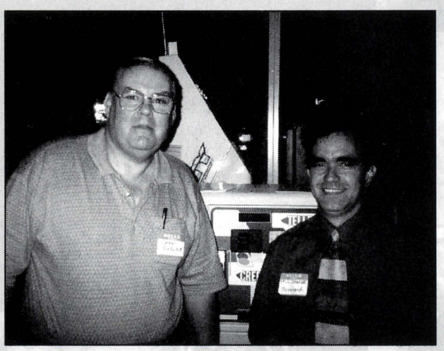
Birmingham Vending in Orlando hosts show

Florida area operators and their families came to the Birmingham Vending post-AMOA open house to see new product and solidify relationships. On display were all the latest videos such as Sega's *Daytona 2*, redemption games such as Benchmark's *Drill-O-Matic,* and countertops such as Merit's *Megatouch* series. ▲

Ron Dulek of Merit Industries (l) and Hutch Hutchingson of Tri-County Vending.



Chuck Arnold (l) of Professional Amusement Systems with Al Kress of Benchmark Games by the new *Drill-O-Matic.*



Larry Sinclair (l) of Birmingham Vending and Phil Showler of Intercard discuss debit card systems.

Ciro Poma (l) of Power Play and Gary Gouse of Birmingham Vending.

The Fun Spot gang, (l-r): Ray Brodie, John Arei, Jennifer Collier, and David Hunner.

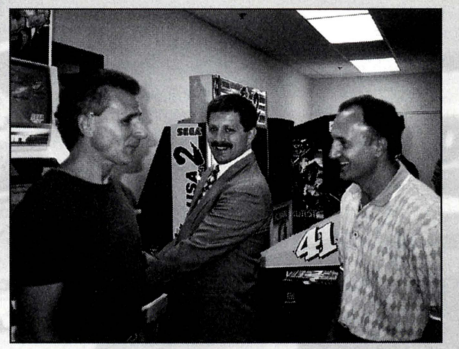
OPEN HOUSE

Atlas in Chicago *offers diversity*

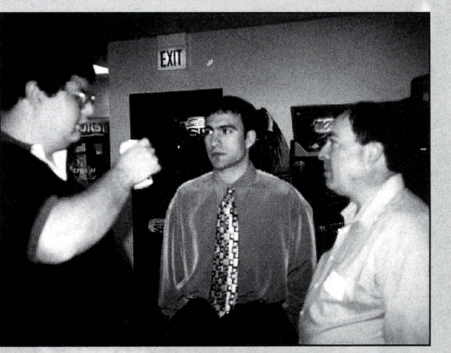
There was plenty for street operators to view at the Atlas Distributing post-AMOA open house. While Chicago-area operators were concerned about the legal battle over the fate of 8-line machines, those who came to see new products were open to other equipment such as ATMs, prize-vending machines, and photo booths. The distributorship offered diversity, the name of the game in today's market.

Among the videos available at Atlas were Namco's *Soul Calibur*, Sega's *Dynamite Cop*, Capcom's *Alpha 3*, Konami's *Fisherman's Bait*, Atari's *Site 4*, and countertops from all the major manufacturers. ▲

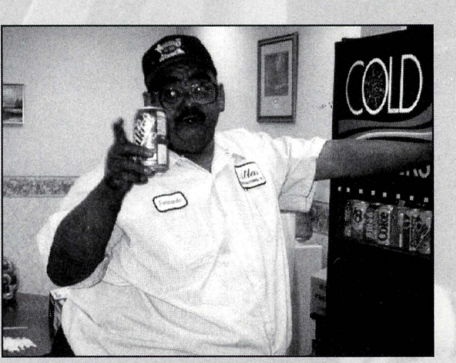
From left: John Lemieux of Dandy Amusement, Ed Velasquez of Velasquez Automatic Music, Scott Lippman of Atlas, and Joe Prokop of J. Prokop Service.



Hank Driver (l) of Advanced Amusement with Tony Maniscalco (c) of Sega and Rick Riggio of Advanced Amusement.



Stephen Veatch of Brunswick (l) talks with Gino Guintoli (c) of Atlas and Steve Joyce of Leisure Time Recreation.



Fernando Rendon of Atlas takes a break after set-up.

Bobbie Fischer of E & B Amusement by Capcom's *Alpha 3*.

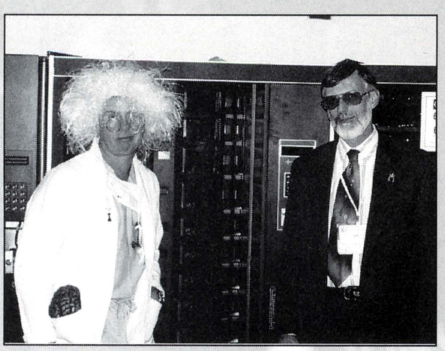
OPEN HOUSE

GUYS AND GHOULS TURN OUT for Betson in Pittsburgh

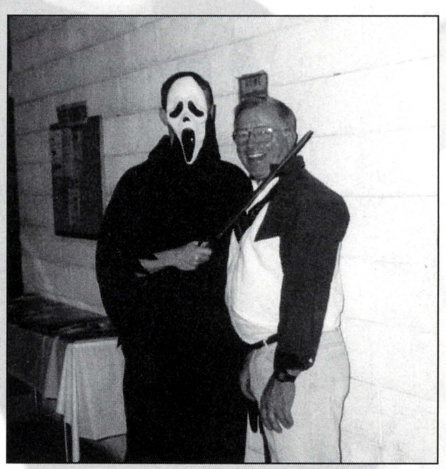
That's Lou Larson (l), Lord of Darkness, with Joe Belfiore of Belfiore Music Co. by the Williams *Monster Bash* pinball.

John Supik Jr. and his wife Dana were among the attendees.

From left: Jim Wittler, Werewolf of Betson, watches as Don Knoch of Don Knoch's Amusement and Tom Keil of Atari play *Gauntlet Legends.*



Lee Ivory (l), the Mad Doctor of Betson, and Kurtis Letton of Rowe International by Rowe vending units. Did you get that brain in your pocket from a machine, Doc?



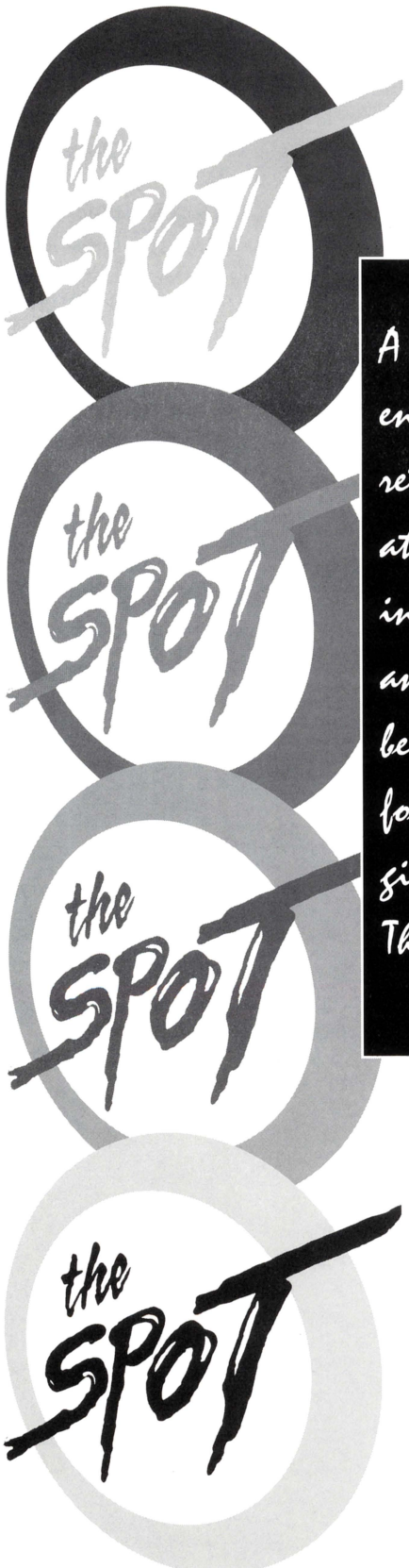
Bob Busche (l), the Grim Reaper of Betson, corners Bill Kusej of Skyview Amusements.

A hair-raising event took place at the Betson Pittsburgh distributorship in the form of a themed post-AMOA and pre-NAMA product showcase. In typical style, Jim Wittler, Lou Larson, and their staff were in costume to suit the introduction of the Williams *Monster Bash* pinball.

The 25,000-square-foot facility was decked out with spider webs, bash pits, pumpkins, witches, vampires, and even wrestlers from the World Wrestling Federation. According to Wittler, people were literally "running around with their heads cut off" to see the latest coin-op games.

The event provided treats instead of tricks as customers from over 80 operating companies enjoyed viewing and sampling both amusement and vending products. Wittler added, "The new products, coupled with customer enthusiasm, really made the day a complete success. We are looking forward to the upcoming weeks. Our sales should be strong with all the new products being released." ▲

Historic district welcomes The Spot



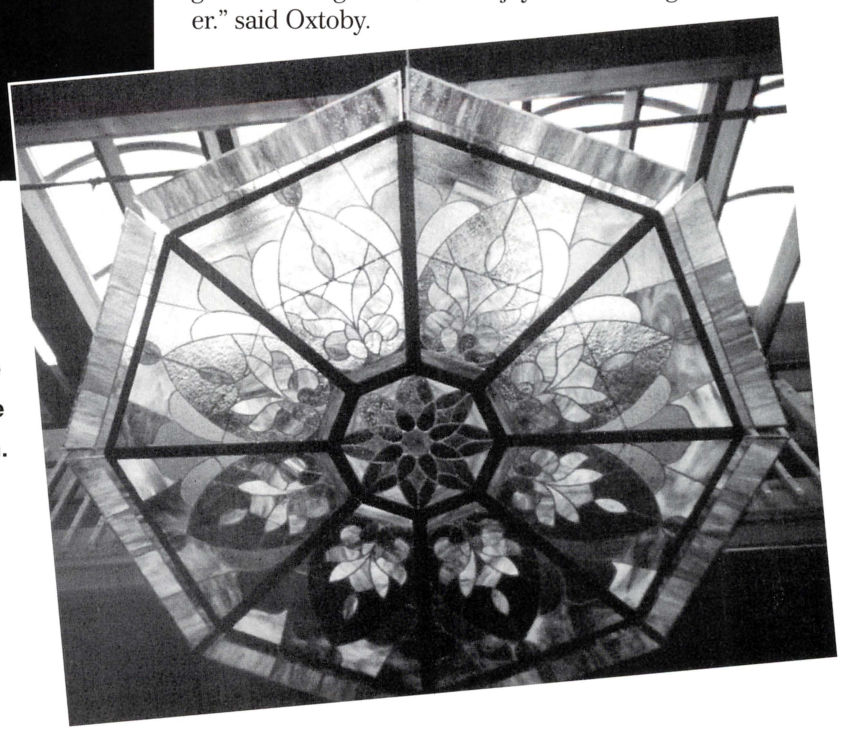
A new restaurant, entertainment, and retail complex opened at 107 W. Cook Street in Springfield, Ill., and quickly came to be the "in" place, following its given name, The Spot.

The 40,000-square-foot facility is located in an historic 100-year-old building that was formerly the Chapman Laundry. That's right. Owner/operator Tom Oxtoby of Phoenix Games said, "The washtubs were so big we made a bar out of one of them."

The Spot features 90 coin-op games (one-third redemption and two-thirds video and pool), the Stricor motion simulator with *Xtreme Powerboat Racing,* three bars, and two restaurants. Plans call for the addition of a coffee bar, 3,000-square-feet of retail space, and a barbershop.

According to Oxtoby, the target market is families with children in the daytime and early evenings. Later, after 9 p.m., the clientele turns more to patrons in their early 20s.

"We want people to come with their children, get something to eat, and enjoy activities together." said Oxtoby.



Skylights and stained glass were part of the renovation.

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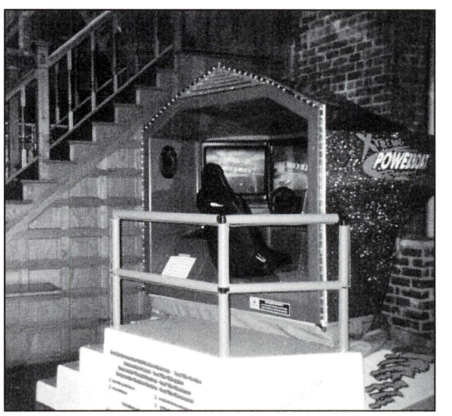
A bank of driving games greets guests.

The game mix is one-third redemption. Prizes range from toys to antiques.



Stricor's motion simulator is by the stairwell that leads to the second floor.

The restaurants offer food that ranges from White Castle hamburgers to upscale salads and pizzas in a regular sit-down restaurant that serves lunch and dinner.

The Spot is well situated in old downtown Springfield across from the state capitol. A late night dance club and premier restaurant are right across the street. The restaurant is in a building that used to be a stable. Both ends of the street are closed off, creating a pedestrian mall.

"We've had a really good response locally, on TV, and through other media, including positive newspaper articles," said Oxtoby. Renovation of the building included skylights, stained glass, and picture windows overlooking the main street. "Parents can see their children on every level," said Oxtoby. "Because of all the glass, no one feels closed in."

Oxtoby has extensive experience in the coin-op industry with two operating companies: Tri-Vend Inc. and Three-Point Redemption. He thought the location was a natural for his vision. He and the owner of the building flew to different restaurant and entertainment centers around the country when researching the project.

Black and white photos of the building chronicle the history of the place, which takes up half a block. Steel pillars inside are covered with plants. Attention has been paid to every detail, including adequate parking, which makes it attractive to venture back to old downtown Springfield. ▲

Seminar Round-Up

Forty seminars were on the schedule at the recent Fun Expo. Here's an opportunity to recap the best parts of seven informative sessions.

Through the Eyes of Kids

Thirteen was a lucky number for the Through the Eyes of Kids session. After a day of fun at WonderWorks on International Drive, 13 young people ranging from kindergarten age to over-13 talked about their favorite activities.

WonderWorks is a new interactive themed attraction that offers hands-on experiences such as the Mystery Lab, where the force of gravity is explained; the Challenge Arena, where a vertical wall must be scaled; and the Lazer Works laser tag arena, where serious zapping takes place in a fantasy setting. Other attractions are the Hurricane Hole, Earthquake Experience, and Bridge of Fire. Mozzarella's Pizzeria is also on-site.

IAFEC president Phil DeAngelo of Lenape Park conducted the session with the assistance of Dr. Jack Samuels. They asked the children a variety of questions that ranged from what games or activities they noticed first to what kinds of food they liked.

As adults we sometimes have preconceived notions about what kids like. Answers from our real customers were enlightening.

Every youngster agreed that he or she would return to WonderWorks for a repeat visit. What was noticed first? The blinking lights, the fact that the building was upside down on the outside, and "all the things to do."

In the food category, pizza and hot dogs were on the preferred list. All the children liked thick crust pizza and were quick to name branded pizza suppliers. Other food items mentioned were ice cream and snowcones.

One of the favorite activities was laser tag—they all played it twice. They found the vests easy to move around in and liked the challenge of earning points.

Some of the children were a bit shy as they sat, wearing tiny microphones TV talk show-style, in front of seminar attendees. One little girl answered "bumper cars" to almost every question, a sure sign that she is a big fan of the bumping fun this classic activity holds for all ages.

When asked about prizes they like at redemption counters, most of the kids were happy with the selections they've seen in FECs, while some thought it takes too many tickets to win prizes.

As DeAngelo said, "The real experts, the guests who really know, are the kids who can make or break our business. Ask them what they like to do, where they like to go, what's hot and what's not, and they will tell you."

Kids' panel, front row, (l-r): Brikelle Griffiths, Alexandra Didier, Gabrielle Didier, and Rochelle Griffiths. Back row, (l-r): Emily Griffiths, Lesley Mangone, Porter Griffiths, Morgan Griffiths, Jordan Griffiths, Mark Zientek, Kristi Foreman, Andressa Leite, and Natalie Didier.

Seminar Round-Up

An Introduction to the OAA

Intel's Mark Nielsen, Quantum3D's David Foley, Lazer-Tron's Norm Petermeier, and Ferris Productions' Bob Ferris paneled a seminar titled "An Introduction to Open Arcade Architecture" during the recent Fun Expo in Orlando, Fla.

Nielsen began by explaining that Intel's Albert Teng founded the Open Arcade Architecture Forum in July 1997 to facilitate and expedite the development of compatible high-end hardware and great entertainment software for the coin-op market. He clarified the fact that all PC technology is not OAA compliant and that Intel will be announcing standards and a certification program. "The OAA driver device will have standards," he said.

The panel included, (l-r): Mark Nielsen, Norm Petermeier, Bob Ferris, and David Foley.

Nielsen added that the vision is to offer robust business tools for more efficiency in business; to offer location to location competition; and to answer innovation with more people working to meet the operators' needs and understand the benefits of the hardware. While there are over 100 members of the OAAF, Nielsen confirmed that there are only a handful that are actually participating. "These companies are working together. Just think what would happen if Sega and Namco worked on a solution together," he said.

Petermeier answered a question he's heard, "Why would Lazer-Tron want to get into the video game business?" He declared that Lazer-Tron saw an opportunity to offer operators more choices and opportunities. "The OAA should allow operators to make more money," he said.

Petermeier gave some examples of how the OAA ArcadePC differs from a traditional video game: traditional has a proprietary platform, the ArcadePC uses a standard platform; traditional has a custom operating system, the ArcadePC used standard Windows 95; traditional requires custom software, ArcadePC uses PC software; traditional uses a custom cabinet, ArcadePC uses a universal cabinet; traditional uses only a few developers, ArcadePC has hundreds; and traditional uses a single manufacturer, ArcadePC has multiple manufacturers.

Petermeier explained further that for home games to make it to the arcade certain software changes were necessary. For instance, there should be less artificial intelligence so the player gets hooked and the game must be easier at the start. Lazer-Tron is adding features like Insta Prize, because as Petermeier stressed, it's important to add features to make the game different.

Ferris explained that his company has developed a Universe Board and signed deals with Electronic Arts, Blue Byte, and Lucas Arts for the rights to use their software for the arcade. Ferris' take on the PC initiative is a bit different than the others because he feels that no changes are necessary to the software as it comes to the arcade from the home. (Read more about what he has to say in this month's "Through the Looking Glass.")

Foley began by acknowledging that operators want problem-free installation, reliability, low maintenance, and great content. "These are the factors operators need to maximize their earnings," Foley noted. "And these are the factors we are working to bring them."

He explained why the OAA is so important, citing reasons like reusability, performance, competitive costs, no single source for software, and standards that mean six months from now operators can get parts.

Quantum3D has developed the Quicksilver ArcadePC, and as Foley told the audience, "we learned a lot of lessons from packaging, software issues, chassis problems, and others. The lessons learned resulted in solutions."

The Quicksilver ArcadePC is ruggedized well beyond commercial and industrial standards. For instance, Foley said, it is designed to be turned off and on unlike you'd do with your computer at home.

He shared Quantum3D's plans to offer a Quicksilver Legacy kit that will enable operators to make their used hardware into OAA machines. Quantum3D recognized that operators had lots of cabinets that could be converted, so the Legacy is for them.

Seminar Round-Up

Laser Tag: Do it Right the First Time

Drew Pawlak of Ultrazone moderated a seminar entitled "Laser Tag: Do it Right the First Time." On the panel were Gary Reedy of New Age Amusements and Jeff Schilling of Creative Works.

Reedy told the audience that he was sitting in their place just six years ago. He started with miniature golf, added a few games, then got hooked on laser tag after sitting in a seminar. "I can say one thing," Reedy noted, "it's a great return on investment."

He offered that he was not a laser tag junkie, only that he looked at what would make him the most money, and that happened to be laser tag. He told the group that if their location has lots of other draws then they could probably do with a lower end laser tag system. However, if laser tag was going to be the major draw, they should opt for a higher end system. Reedy said, "Doing laser tag right the first time requires preparation time and research to determine how large a part laser tag will play in your facility. I recommend that laser tag be a part of the activity mix in every FEC. In making this decision, you must first work on site selection, cost of development, demographic studies, and finalizing what mix you will offer."

Reedy added that he is a firm believer in location, location, location. "In other words, location is important and good locations are not cheap. If you must rent, get creative with the rent structure. I suggest you offer 20 percent of yearly gross sales. However, the landlord will want a guaranteed minimum or base rent. Be sure that the base for assumed gross sales is conservative," he explained.

Reedy shared his views on demographics: "We use a count of 125,000 population within a five-mile radius. Don't use a car count in the area. And make sure you're in a growth area. You don't want a store by an older neighborhood with very few children even if the income in that area is high."

Pawlak gave the audience some numbers to consider: 27 percent of players are first-timers; 32 percent are casual players who play a couple of times a year; 25 percent are members who play often; and 16 percent are zoneheads, obsessive players who may play hundreds of times a year.

He explained that to capture the market, you must plan and research, find the right location, concentrate on the site design, and buy the right game system. Look for these factors in selecting your site: safety first; 7,000 to 10,000 square feet; visibility; location near or next to other entertainment projects; high ceilings; and reasonable building conditions.

When choosing a system, Pawlak advised looking for one that is flexible and serves all of the market. Pawlak warned the audience that laser tag is no longer on the cutting edge and you may not see results like were seen at first. "We're well past the days of 'if you build it they will come.'"

Schilling went a step further in stressing the importance of doing it right the first time with this thought: "If you don't have the time to do it right the first time, when will you have the time to do it over?"

He also emphasized the "WOW" effect, which he explained is when customers leave with their expectations met. He talked of theming with colors, patterns, textures, props, lighting, sounds, etc. "You must have successful blending of all these elements for the WOW effect," he said, adding that it includes the entry and lobby as well as the arena. "Your customers spend more time in the lobby than they do in the arena, but some locations leave this area out of the budget," he said. "Look at your site through your customers' eyes. Make sure it projects the image you want it to."

Schilling noted that there are more choices in entertainment, and time and money are precious. "You must create an environment that will attract customers to your location," he said. "Where players get outfitted and receive instructions starts to set them up for the experience. Your arena should have different effects and props to create a memorable experience."

Seminar Round-Up

Building Your Business with Coin-Op

LEFT PHOTO:
From left: Casey Lee of Red & Jerry's, Karyn Gitler of CEC Entertainment, George Smith of Namco Cybertainment, and Carl Winston and Kevin Smith of Jeepers!

BOTTOM PHOTO:
Frank Seninsky of Alpha Omega and an attendee discuss redemption.

No sugar-coating was needed, although candy was tossed into the audience as an ice-breaker. The session titled "Building Your Business with Coin-Op" featured the knowledgeable panel of George Smith of Namco Cybertainment, Frank Seninsky of Alpha Omega, and Karyn Gitler of CEC Entertainment.

Smith cautioned, "Coin-op games are not a catch-all for all your problems. You have to determine the right mix to attract your customers. Pieces of coin-op equipment are not furniture; they are sophisticated and expensive pieces of technology. What we often hear is, 'I have some space; I want you to fill it.'"

Smith, who dispensed the above mentioned candy, creatively used chocolate candy bars to illustrate game placement and game variety to show how both affect the revenue of a game room. The name of the game, according to Smith, is to maximize the revenue in the available space.

He advised: "You can't overestimate how important it is to prepare and investigate before embarking on a project. It's not something to be taken lightly when you are talking about the amount invested in games. He explained that where games used to cost around $2,500 to $5,000, games now regularly cost $15,000 and up. "We're looking at a smaller group of buyers and manufacturers," he said. "We're just in a nasty squeeze right now."

Seninsky delved into redemption games, explaining hit frequency and win percentages that can influence the bottom line. He advised: "Don't trust the factory settings. The factory does not know your market, customer base, or other games in your location. You can't just throw the games out on the floor. Pay close attention to ticket payout; one game with a lopsided payout takes away from the others. Rotate the games to protect your asset value."

"You can't overestimate how important it is to prepare and investigate before embarking on a project."

"There is a golden rule in this business," said Seninsky, "Put the games where the people are, and find ways to get them to start playing."

According to Seninsky, discounts are one way to give people a taste of the games so they will return to play. "Games are an impulse item," he said. "They should be in a prime space. They're probably the best earners per square foot for entertainment. The games are not an attraction in themselves. People build giant facilities to draw people to be repeat customers. While they are there they play the games."

Seninsky defined the repeat cus-

Seminar Round-Up

tomer as one who experiences a series of positive events and wants to come back.

On the subject of contracts, Seninsky said that every account has its own agreement. A contract should be a guide for both sides and fair to both parties. It should spell out pertinent information such as game rotation and hours of service. "If you understand each other's business better, then all the businesses will flourish," he said.

The effervescent Gitler focused her attention on prize merchandise. She noted that first you must know your guests to be able to choose desirable prizes. "It doesn't cut it to just put in slum (low-end) merchandise, a few videos, and toys. Kids are more sophisticated. If you are going for the under-six age group, that will determine the types of prizes you select. If you have go-karts and laser tag, you will have more guys and should get more guy prizes."

Winning is a guiding principle for Gitler. "Kids need to win something," she said. "Winning means guests take pride in playing the games and competing."

"There is a golden rule: Put the games where the people are, and find ways to get them to start playing."

In respect to redemption item (ticket) pricing, she said, "The money the guests spend has to equal the prize and the fun they had. You can charge more for prizes if the entertainment value in the facility is high. If you only have a game room and not a lot of other entertainment value, then the tickets per prize can be lower."

For prize ideas, she suggested visiting malls to see the hot retail items, including those specialty carts; checking out toy stores and close-out stores; and sending a good buyer to merchandise shows. Plus, don't forget to check out your competition.

There's also nothing better than asking guests directly. Said Gitler. "Ask teens what they like, and use their suggestions cautiously." She added, "Take the time to look at your product mix. It's not a matter of price alone."

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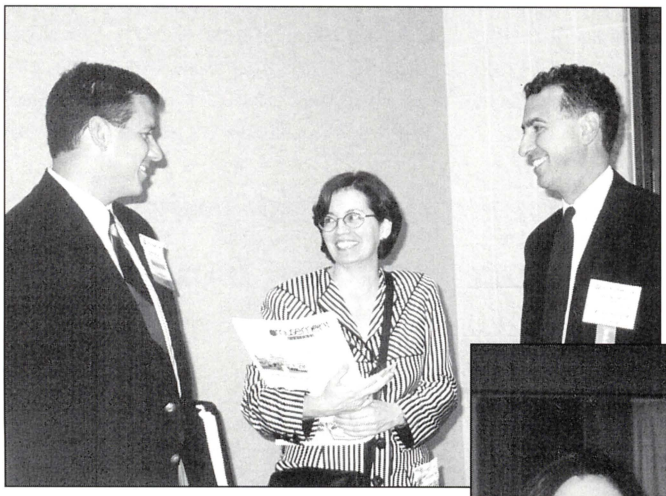
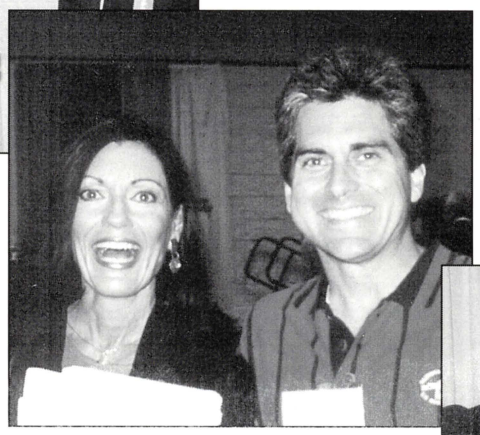
Seminar Round-Up

Location-Based Conference Program





TOP PHOTO:
From left: Darin Grobe and Jessie Robertson of Interior Systems and Kevin Smith of Jeepers!

MIDDLE PHOTO:
Elena Rouane of Enchanted Castle and Anthony DeAngelis of Odyssey Fun-World after the LBE session on new concepts.

BOTTOM PHOTO:
Bill Salter of TVS Architects confers with an attendee about facility design.

The second Location-Based Entertainment (LBE) Conference Program, held the day before Fun Expo's exhibit floor opened, featured four sessions on topics that ranged from new entertainment business models and LBE funding to brand identity and new concepts in LBEs. Pat Esgate of Esgate & Associates moderated all the sessions.

In "Brand Identity: Standing Out in a Crowd of Me-Toos," the panel consisted of NormaLynn Cutler of Cutler Enterprises, David Polinchock of Location-Based Branding, and Arlene Spiegel of Market Discoveries.

According to Spiegel, food service can help your location stand out. "The message is 'come eat, drink, and be merry, not just be merry.' That's a compelling case to do your own food service, create your own brand, and have total control. Then you have to fine tune your brand."

What makes a good food center? Pat Esgate said, "The experience has to be authentic, unique to your facility, and it has to do with interaction. Visitors have to have an experience that contributes to their overall stay."

Another message: When guests go out of their own areas, they want something different. While chains are familiar, they are also sterile. No matter what market you're in, there is always an independent who is successful. You don't just want an eating solution.

Said NormaLynn Cutler: "If your store is layered enough with activities, you can do special events (some annual and some not). You have to bring people back. They have to have another reason to come back."

It was noted that you can't build a brand on machines alone because other people buy the same machines. It has to be your location and your quality first, and then they will play the machines, the same ones they can play elsewhere.

In "Through the Looking Glass: Previewing New Concepts in Location-Based Entertainment," the panel was composed of Bill Salter of TVS Architects and Kevin Smith of Jeepers!

Salter, whose career includes design and planning while at Disney Imagineering, Mountasia, and Malibu Grand Prix, discussed the adult market. Malibu Speed Zone was cited as an example of a successful adult location that found its niche with activities such as real fuel-injected dragsters instead of traditional activities like bumper cars and boats. Miniature golf was retained for its universal appeal.

Salter recommended 10 to 12 acres to correctly pull off a facility with both indoor and outdoor attractions. Other advice: "Anybody's park can do a great weekend business. The art of this business is filling your location on weekdays," and "Maintain the quality of your services. Everything has to look fresh, nice, and professional. Remember, you are always building your customer base."

"At some point your games will be tired," Salter said. "You have to know when to sell them." He believes in preempting the competition with updates and new amenities before guest interest wanes.

Seminar Round-Up

He mentioned one area that sometimes gets only a passing glance: "The back side of your facility is equally important as the front side because it's marketing seen from the freeway or another street. Don't spend all of your money on the front. Do, however, spend massive amounts on landscaping that helps everything else look good."

Solid architecture and good themed decorations are integral to a facility, said Salter. "Theming is everything. You can't just have a big room and paint the walls red and purple and fill it with games."

Smith focused on children's centers. Smith, an architect who has designed office buildings as far away as Moscow, discussed the Jeepers! indoor animated theme park that caters mostly to children ages two to 12. "Teens and adults don't mix, especially indoors," said Smith.

Rides are the backbone of the entertainment market, according to Smith. "The physical experience of rides cannot be replaced," he noted. At Jeepers! there are rides for kids and rides that accommodate both parents and kids, so they can enjoy an activity together.

"The message is, 'come eat, drink, and be merry,' not just be merry."

He commented that while a soft modular play structure as a standalone business has "lost its prime," parents expect these areas and expect their kids to be tired out. "FECs have to do larger and fancier soft modular play areas because places like McDonald's have raised the bar and expectations."

Want to keep guests longer? Smith says food adds to the length of the stay, adding, "Food on its own represents one-fourth of our total revenue."

Jeepers! hosts up to 100 birthday parties a week. "There's nothing more important than delivering a good party experience," said Smith. Also big are redemption games, a themed sandbox area, a fire truck for exploring, face painting, waterplay area with boats, and costumed characters that delight children as they walk around the center. "We absolutely ban all the violent video games," he offered.

In conclusion, Smith said, "If kids are having a great time, parents are too. Themed environments look good to parents. There is a lot of room in the industry for more concepts like this."

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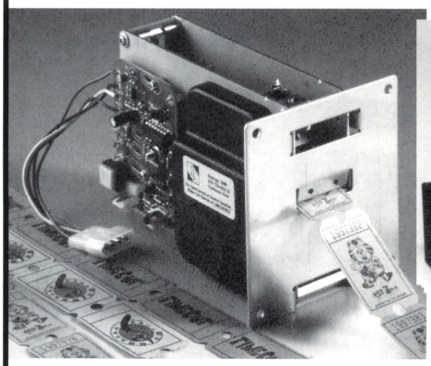

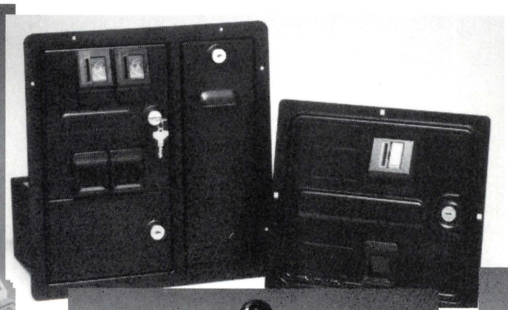

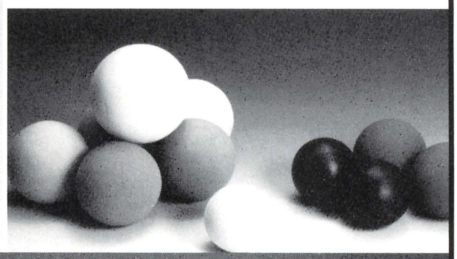

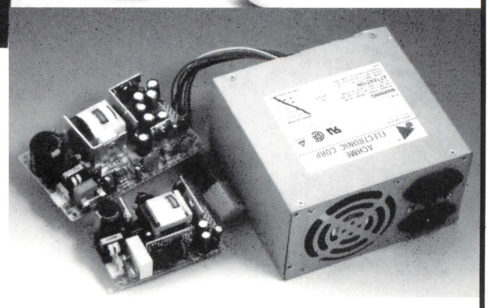

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Seminar Round-Up

Do Not Pass on the Industry's PAS!

The Fun Pass Session entitled "The Skinny on Video Game Ratings Regulations" was an early one in the way of morning times for the Expo's seminars, but the information and encouragement it offered to members of the industry was well worth the effort of those who got up that morning to attend. Though the attendance was itself "skinny," presenters Michael Getlan of Amusement Consultants Ltd. and Smiles Amusement Co., Frank Cosentino of Namco America, and Rich Holley of Southeast Game Brokers Inc. did not abate in their fervor for their topic of the Parental Advisory System (PAS) for video games.

In a room decorated with several poster-sized descriptions of the PAS stickers, the three men created a comfortable and informative setting in which learning about the PAS became something about which industry members can feel enthusiastic, instead of burdened. According to Getlan, implementing the PAS is the first issue that four video game associations have rallied behind together.

Getlan drove home the point that implementing the PAS is one of the most effective ways of bettering customer service. According to Getlan, by informing parents and others of the ratings of particular games, an operator is, in effect, telling his customers what kinds of games are available. This allows the customer to feel more confident selecting a video game to play.

Holley recounted his involvement with blocking the recently proposed Florida legislation, entitled "Children's Protection from Violence Acts," which would have resulted in strong restrictions on video game manufacturers, distributors, and operators and attempted to prevent anyone under 18 years of age from playing games with graphic violence. Because Florida is a bellwether state when it comes to legislation, Holley's tale about how fast government can become involved with the choices the industry makes was particularly chilling.

For his part, Cosentino spoke as a manufacturer who believes strongly—he is also the father of four—that games deserve to be rated and that the current PAS system is the industry's best defense against further attempts by the government, be it federal, state, or municipal, to legislate the video game industry.

All three presenters urged every manufacturer, distributor, and operator to implement the PAS by obtaining posters, stickers and related materials from AMOA, AAMA, IAFEC, or IAAPA. ▲

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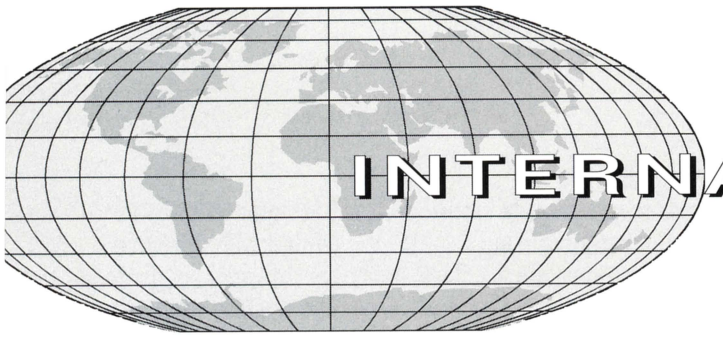


INTERNATIONAL SCENE

IMA ATTENDANCE GROWS

With the number of exhibitors at over 230 from 22 countries, the 1998 IMA, held in Frankfurt, Germany, exceeded the booking figures of the previous year. The new Hall 8 for the trade fair, with 30,000 square meters of exhibition space, offered ample opportunities for exhibiting companies. According to IMA director Peter Lassahn, interest in IMA had never been greater. As a result, IMA offered the IMA Service Cheque Book, which allowed trips to the trade fair to be booked quickly and easily as a package. For more information, contact IMA, +49(0)211 90191 134/183; fax +49(0)211 90191 127; Web site (www.ima-messe.com).

PACIFIC RIM UPDATE, COURTESY OF GAME MACHINE

Nintendo Co. Ltd., Kyoto, shipped the hand-held video game Game Boy Color in Japan on October 21. Employing the TFT color liquid crystal screen, it is the same in size as the conventional black and white version Game Boy. It is possible to use the game software cartridge for the black and white version Game Boy in this new color version.

The color version game software for the Game Boy Color will also be shipped. The first two titles are Warioland 2 and Tetris Deluxe. Nintendo says that it intends to increase the library of color version software titles.

Japan Amusement Machine Manufacturers Association (JAMMA) held its 3rd Asia Amusement Machine Show in Shanghai Dec. 4-6, although the purpose is not clear. It is guessed from the situation of shows held in Hong Kong and Singapore that the purposes lie in activating the arcade market in the city where the show is held by allowing the public to enjoy free play. Accordingly, not many traders are expected to visit the show. Since 1996 the overall exhibition size has been decreasing gradually.

The Administration for Industry and Commerce (AIC) in Guangzhou and Panyu, Guangzhou, China, raided five counterfeit traders who distributed unauthorized copies of SNK's Neo-Geo software such as *King of Fighters 2, Metal slug 2, Real Bout,* and *Fatal Fury 2.* Raided companies included Wah Lap Electronics Co., Xin Le Electronic Amusement Co., and Kong Long Amusement Machine and Trade Co. in Panyu, and Wei Xin Electronic Amusement Co. and Tian Xiao Amusement Machine Trade Co. in Guangzhou. This action was carried out following a complaint brought by SNK Corp., Osaka, and AIC forbade the five raided counterfeiters to do business, collecting fines of $3,000-$4,000 from each counterfeiter.

SNK Corp. announced that it will open a theme park, Neo-Geo World Tokyo, at Daiba, Tokyo, in spring 1999. Although the amount of investment is not clear, SNK explained that about two million people per year will visit the park. The park will occupy part of a theme shopping mall now under construction.

20TH IRISH SHOW TO INCREASE BY 50 PERCENT

AmEx '99—The 20th Irish Amusement Trade Exhibition will be held at the Doyle Green Isle Hotel, Dublin, March 2-3, 1999. The organizers will erect a temporary building alongside the main hall to house the new exhibitors who require stands. With only a few stands remaining in the existing halls, the organizers were faced with moving the venue or increasing the available space at the Doyle Green Isle Hotel. The additional temporary building will house the new exhibitors and a refreshment area for visitors.

A series of seminars will be held alongside the exhibition. These will include technical seminars, Euro Seminars, and Year 2000 Seminars, addressing a number of very important issues for those involved in the industry.

Randy Fromm, the internationally renowned technical guru of the coin-op industry and exclusive in *Play Meter* magazine, will conduct a series of technical seminars for technicians and service personnel attending the show. Forfas, The EMU Business Awareness Campaign, will host seminars on the EMU (European Monetary Union) and the introduction of the Euro. A leading expert in the area of computer technology will address the issues involved for PC users arising from the millennium bug.

This series of seminars will be of interest to owners, managers, and technical staff of companies involved in the coin-op amusement, gaming, and vending industries. The seminars will be repeated twice daily on both show dates, and although the seminars are free, advance registration is essential, as numbers are limited.

AmEx is organized by MD Associates, promoted by *Coin-Op News,* and supported by IAEA (Irish Amusement Equipment Association), which is a member of Euromat. For further information contact Susan Feery or Martin Dempsey, +

353 (0)45 521190; fax + 353 (0)45 521198; e-mail (mdassociates@tinet.ie).

PURCHASING BUDGETS TOP 332M AT LONDON'S ATEI

Buyers attending the 1998 Amusement Trades Exhibition International and London Parks & Attractions Show came with budgets whose total value was in excess of $332M, according to independent research conducted by Exhibition Audience Audits Ltd. The research was conducted to industry standards approved by the Association of Exhibition Organizers and did not include visitors attending the International Casino Exhibition - London.

ATE Chief Executive Peter Rusbridge said: "These figures have been calculated from the research undertaken by EAA and demonstrate the importance of ATEI as a business event. Of course we realize that not all of this budget is necessarily spent at the show, but exhibitions should be about putting manufacturers and suppliers in front of a top class audience with the power to buy. The figures show that ATEI does just that—rather well in fact!"

ATEI and The London Parks & Attractions Show attracted a total of 324 exhibitors in 1998, with 15,186 buyers attending the two co-located exhibitions. A further 4,884 visitors attended the International Casino Exhibition located on the first floor of the Earls Court 1 exhibition hall. ATEI '99 is being held January 26-28.

The research has shown that 81 percent of visitors to ATEI '98 worked at either board or management level within their organizations. Within this group, 45 percent occupied board level positions, 21 percent were chairmen or managing directors, and 21 percent were owners or partners.

The proportion of international influences attending the show is even greater, with 59 percent of visitors employed outside the UK holding what is described by the EAA researchers as "board level positions."

ATEI's visitor base continues to grow at a healthy rate. 1998 was the first occasion that attendance topped 20,000. This audience comprised a combination of both first-time and long-standing visitors. The EAA research showed that 65 percent of visitors had been to ATEI previously; of these 24 percent had visited on between five and nine occasions, and 23 percent recorded 10 or more trips to the show.

As the show has broadened its exhibitor base, it has succeeded in attracting new buyers. Some 35 percent of the 1998 attendance was made up of buyers making their first visit to the exhibition. For more information, contact Paul Grinnall, +44 (0)171 713 0302; fax +44 (0)171 713 6630.

CAMBER'S MOBILE SIMULATOR AT LIVE '98

Camber entertainment introduced its newest "ride-the-brand" project, a mobile simulator for the Sony PlayStation promotional campaign, at Live '98, the United Kingdom consumer electronics show. The Morphis 20-seat capsule MovieRide simulator encompasses theater technology with digital imagery, large screen presentation, and 3D-surround sound. A purpose-built trailer is teamed with a Renault Magnum truck unit, which features such modifications as chrome stack exhausts, spotlights, and a PlayStation livery.

An "inside-the-game" ridefilm has been commissioned by production company Brainwave, the developers of the original concept. Computer animations and special effects have been combined with actual game footage taken from the PlayStation console. The 60-foot rig is owned and operated on Sony's behalf by S&D Leisure. Plans are to tour the United Kingdom for one year with appearances at a series of key public events. For more information, contact Camber, +44 (0) 1293 427920; fax +44 (0) 1293 427925; email (info@camber.co.uk).

FEXPO '99 SLATED FOR MARCH

Fexpo, the Family Entertainment Fair, will take place March 18-20, 1999, in Barcelona, Spain, at the Montjuic exhibition area, Fira de Barcelona, Palacio del Cincuentenario. The annual, international event is open to professionals and guests and is hosted by ACEFA, the National Association of Family Entertainment Centers. Exhibitions include family entertainment centers, theme parks, waterparks, amusement parks, soft plays, inflatables, miniature golf, sport games, kiddie rides, simulators, dispensing and vending, prizes, gifts, souvenirs, technical equipment, and catering. Fexpo is sponsored by Fundacion de Estudios del Ocio (The Leisure Studies Foundation). For more information contact Fexpo '99, +934 16 14 66; fax +934 15 00 95; Web site (www.interalia.es/fexpo.html). ▲

Camber Entertainment's 20-seat MovieRide simulator is an animated part of the Sony PlayStation promotional campaign.

CD compilations offer more hits

Compilation records have come a long way since the days of TV advertising for the latest K-Tel 8-track disco collection. Today, compilations on CD are issued almost contemporaneously with the full-length albums from which the cuts are drawn.

Compilations are produced featuring the best songs in the genres of soul, country, pop, rock, dance, hip-hop, and Latino and are distributed not only to the general public, but also made exclusively for jukebox operators and DJs. Most importantly, compilation CDs often rank as the top selling CDs from distributors and as the most played by customers.

We spoke to two manufacturers of CD compilations for jukeboxes, Hot Hits and Top Ten Compilations, who shared with us their thoughts on the "hows" and "whys" of producing these popular records for jukebox operators and their customers. Both companies release about 10 volumes of each genre per year.

"Obviously the advantage of a compilation CD is that you get more hits," said Joe Light, vice president of sales at Top Ten Compilations. "Oftentimes, at the time that you buy a disc, there's only one song you're looking for on that disc. Hopefully, you get one or two more singles off of it. And unless the person walking up to the jukebox is a fan of that particular artist and has that CD, they probably don't know three-quarters of the songs on there, if not all but one. So from an economic standpoint it makes a whole lot more sense for an operator to buy compilations. If you can give a man 500 songs that really do play, hits that are recognizable to the general public, I think his box is going to play a lot more."

The practical advantages of compilations also extend into greater affordability for the operator. "It's really a way for the operator to keep his jukebox current without having to buy 14 different CDs to do so, which of course they aren't going to do and can't afford to do," said Bill Guler, director of licensing and programming at Hot Hits. "It's kind of a niche business. The labels are willing to license their brand new product because they know we are just selling it to CD jukebox operators or mobile DJs."

In the jukebox market, country and pop compilations move the best, a fact that Guler attributes to the genres' strengths throughout different geographical markets. But compilations of other genres also continue to sell well and receive a lot of coin play. "We put 14 songs on each CD and do several different formats because locations are different," Guler said. "We do country, pop, rock, R&B, adult contemporary, and we do a dance disc which is really probably more for the DJ than for the operator. The country is the most popular, reflecting, I think, country music's overall popularity these days. And next would be pop followed by rock, R&B, and then AC."

For operators interested in placing Latino songs on their jukeboxes, it is worth noting that both Top Ten Compilations and Hot Hits pointed to recent difficulties in producing Latino compilations. "I think Latino is in a growing stage, so it's hard to get the clearances on that stuff," Light said regretfully. "I think it's where black music was 30 years ago. The music outgrows the management sometimes; Latino is definitely a hot genre." Hot Hits does not seem to be faring

Jim McCormick

any better when it comes to acquiring the new Latino material. "We have not done a Latino compilation in over a year because we have had trouble getting titles licensed," Guler told *Play Meter.* "There's been some change of personnel at a couple of the major Hispanic labels. We are still working on it, and we are hoping to be coming out with something, but we have been stymied for the last several months."

When asked about the shelf life of compilation CDs, Guler said, "It varies. Some people never take the discs off the box and leave them off. Some people take them off and put them back out maybe a year down the road as oldies discs. I think the shelf life of country is a lot longer because people tend to like country songs a lot longer, whether the songs are on the current charts or not. Then next in shelf life is the rock or pop."

"A country compilation's shelf life is probably easily six months, and with pop and rock it depends because those songs arrive at different stations across the country at different times," Guler said.

Light estimated that the shelf life of compilation CDs is even longer than six months. "On a compilation, six or seven songs are going to be true hits, and they will endure," Light said. "There are some songs that never get old, and there are songs that were hits that fade away. The shelf life of a compilation is probably a year or so, a lot longer than anything else you've got on a box."

"We are now working on volume 67," Guler said of Hot Hits. "On our volume 62, which we came out with over five months ago, we have titles which are still charting in the *Radio and Records'* (which tracks radio play across the country) top 50 radio chart. On that volume 62 we have the current #4 song, the Goo Goo Dolls' "Iris," a song which is at #18, and songs by Brandy and Monica which are at #35 and #34, respectively.

"Now on country compilations, we are working on volume 85, but we have some cuts on our volume 81 that are still 'bulleted' on the charts today. The country CDs definitely tend to play longer."

In addition to using their crystal balls when selecting new songs for compilations, manufacturers look closely at what is starting out on radio, what is going to be released in the coming weeks, early ads at radio, track records for the group, and any other information that might help to determine the upcoming popularity of particular songs.

"We do a number of things when picking songs," said Light. "We look at what's hot right now and what's coming up. We do some anticipation, but not too much, and we look at sales and charts. We also try to get a good mix on a compilation disc. Obviously, clearances are a part of the process too."

The compilation CD is going to be around for a long time. It helps a lot of people, including operators and recording artists, particularly because there are a lot of artists whose records operators would not buy for one song only.

"Compilations have a promotional aspect and a sales aspect," Light concluded. "We have thought all along that it's a win/win thing all the way down the line: the one stop gets a good buy, the record company gets its artist promoted, operators get a good buy, and the person who's going into a jukebox venue and puts his $2 in there gets a good selection. From the manufacturer to the end user, you've got a win/win situation."

"You figure that basically in a jukebox, the top 20 most popular songs are where you're getting all your play, and the bottom 80 get very little play," Guler mused. "So leaving a compilation on the box probably makes more sense than leaving on a full length with only one or two popular songs."

For more information on acquiring compilation CDs in any genre, contact your music distributors. ▲

The year's most-performed country songs

Both BMI, in its 1998 Country Awards ceremony, and ASCAP, in its 1998 Country Music Awards ceremony, have announced their affiliated writers' and publishers' most-performed country songs of the last year. Here they are.

BMI'S TOP TEN:

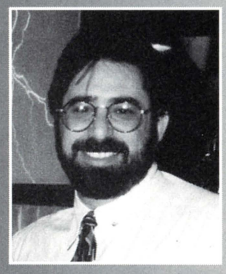
"All the Good Ones Are Gone"
"Angel in My Eyes"
"Better Man, Better Off"
"Between the Devil and Me"
"A Broken Wing"
"Carrying Your Love with Me"
"Change My Mind"
"Come Cryin' To Me"
"Count Me In"
"Dancin', Shagin' on the Boulevard"

ASCAP'S TOP 10:

"All the Good Ones Are Gone"
"Amen Kind of Love"
"Another You"
"Better Man, Better Off"
"Check Yes or No"
"Come Cryin' to Me"
"Count Me In"
"Daddy's Money"
"Dark Horse"
"Don't Love Make a Diamond Shine"

Market specificity:

tailor your product selection



Michael Getlan is a third generation owner/operator of arcades and family entertainment centers and a member of IAAPA's Education, Technology, and Award Committees. He is director of operations for Amusement Consultants Ltd. of New Rochelle, N.Y., which operates 40 locations in 12 U.S. states and Central America, and is a frequent speaker at industry conventions.

Market awareness is a term that is often tossed around in business seminars. To some people, market awareness means having knowledge of your clientele in terms of the standard demographics information requested by most investors interested in starting a business: income levels, size and composition of households, and age and ethnic diversity, as well as other statistics.

In the coin-op game business, knowing your market means tailoring your game selection and prize selection for the guests who patronize your facility.

With the varied game types and amazing choices in prizes, this type of market tweaking is a challenge that needs to be done frequently. As time and your market evolves, market and product specificity is the only way to keep up with the change.

GAMES

As the primary product in a game room, games need to be specifically chosen to satisfy the most common interests of the target clientele.

Sports games; shooting, driving, and fighting games; cranes and other product vendors; redemption equipment; and pool and electronic darts all have their place in the game room. The question usually is, "Which products do I use in my game room?"

In a huge game room there would be no problem. Just put one of everything and double-up (or triple-up) on the most popular pieces—just kidding! Generally speaking, this is not an option for most operators or most operations. Choices must be made.

A general rule is to place games in a new facility based on the kind of venue it is—amusement park, free-standing local arcade, sports bar, family or children's entertainment center, etc.—and generalize about the kind of clientele that facility will attract.

Of course, if the facility has been operating for a while and has a track record, it will be relatively easy to determine the kinds of guests that the new game room will be serving.

Once a basic selection of games has been installed, changes can be made based on the income levels of each piece of equipment. Additional units of a popular piece can be added if it appears that market demands are not being met. Incorrect choices can always be corrected. Experimentation is the key to success.

Coin-op equipment offers the advantage of rapid evaluation, based on income levels, and the ability for equipment to be changed quickly in response to shifts in popularity and income levels. Changes can be within a location or between facilities in a multistore situation.

The location of specific games within a facility is a little used, poorly understood aspect of market specificity. Game rooms have a definite traffic flow, and this flow of guests allows for

placement of under-performing games in a position to gain maximum exposure. This may be enough to pull an under-performing game up to an acceptable level.

To understand more about the facility that you serve, spend time there. Work in the store, or simply observe the traffic at various times to get a feel for it. Remember that all markets evolve, and your guests will change over time. Make the effort to visit these sites even if they have been operating for a considerable time.

PRIZES

Most game areas (game rooms and local street stops) have prize-vending or ticket-vending equipment, such as cranes or redemption games. Prizes are the driving force behind the popularity of these games. Prize selection is another form of market specificity.

Again, experimentation is the key to success. While generalizing about your guests is a good way to start, you can never tell exactly what will be popular. The only rule with prizes is that, with very few exceptions, prizes must change on a regular basis to continue to capture the interest of your guests.

"Incorrect choices can always be corrected. Experimentation is the key to success."

One tactic is to try out new items in small quantities so that rapid change is possible. The relatively low investment in small quantity purchases is a strong point. The flip side to this cautious approach is that if an item is popular, guests will have to wait until you can reorder.

Market specificity is different for prizes than games, because sometimes guests redeem tickets or play games with the plan to give the prizes away as gifts. Many times guests will look for a prize that is different from what they would want for themselves, so traditional market survey techniques are less effective than you might think.

Surveys are less productive in the long run than the simple concept of trying a lot of things and not being afraid to be wrong. The only way to stay current with your ever-changing market parameters is to keep experimenting and keep failing. You will never learn anything about your market when you are right—only when you are wrong. ▲

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TAX TIPS

TURN A TAX DISASTER INTO A WEALTH-BUILDING BONANZA

This year is the 40th anniversary of this tax column. Over 1,000 articles have been written. But never has the response from readers been greater—phone calls, letters, and faxes--as exemplified by two recent items in the column, both of which are sort of kissing cousins. What are the subjects? Income, with respect to a decedent (IRD), and SUBTRUSTS. Not exactly the kind of stuff that would draw cheering or excited crowds.

Now that we know the applause level of these subjects, this article presents the problem (IRD) and the solution (SUBTRUST).

So, if you have (or someday may have) about $200,000 or more in a qualified plan (such as a profit sharing or pension plan, 401(k) plan, or rollover IRA), this article is a must read.

First the problem. Say you have $1 million (substitute your own number) in a qualified plan. Every dollar you take out of the plan is subject to income tax. Unless you spend it, the balance is subject to estate tax. In the highest brackets (40 percent income tax and 55 percent estate tax), your family gets only 27 percent, $270,000, out of that $1 million. The IRS gets 73 percent, $730,000. Of course, your home state usually gets a piece of the action, further reducing your family's share.

Now, suppose you die with $1 million in your plan. The IRS gives you a second chance to get clobbered with double taxes. Your heirs, in effect, pay the same amount you would have paid if you had withdrawn the funds during your life. A horrible confiscatory tax!

Now the solution: SUBTRUSTS. A SUBTRUST allows you to use a certain portion (normally, up to 50 percent) of your plan funds to buy life insurance. You can buy insurance on your life (single life) or on you and your spouse (second-to-die). At your death (or your spouse if second-to-die), the policy proceeds are free of the estate tax.

A few real life examples are the best way to drive home the huge-saving and wealth-creation possibilities of using SUBTRUSTS.

A single client, age 60, with $1 million in his plan purchased $7 million of life insurance in his SUBTRUST. Every penny will go to his heirs, tax-free.

A married client, age 56, with a 53-year-old wife had $212,000 in a 401 (k) plan, which is receiving annual contributions of about $11,000 each year, purchased $2 million of second-to-die insurance in his SUBTRUST.

If you have an estate that will need a big chunk of cash when you (or your spouse) go to the big business in the sky, you should consider a SUBTRUST. It is capable of taking a potential tax disaster and turning it into a wealth-enhancing bonanza.

Married or single, lifetime tax planning is a must.

Business owners who are single have special tax problems—all of which appear onerous when compared to their married counterparts' problems. During life: no joint return; only a $10,000 gift exclusion per year donee (instead of $20,000 when married). At death: no marital deduction to stop the estate tax cold when the first spouse dies; only $625,000 estate tax free (instead of $1,250,000) in 1998.

Well, here comes a true tax tale of a single business owner. Let's call him Joe. He came all the way from Portland to Chicago to get a second tax opinion. [I should note that usually when there's that much distance between the business owner's home and my office, the second tax opinion consultations occur via phone and fax, instead of starting with a plane ride.]

Joe (a vigorous 68 years young) operates his business (a C Corporation called Success Co.) with his only son, Sam. He has three daughters—none in the business. Aside from Success Co., Joe's taxable estate includes these significant assets: land and building, which he leases to Success Co.; and two life insurance policies, one for $500,000 owned by and payable to Success Co., and one for $600,000 owned by Joe and payable to his kids equally.

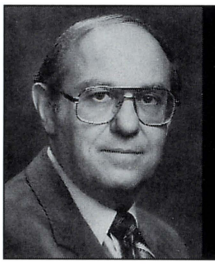
We divided Joe's tax plan into two parts: lifetime planning and death planning. Following are the significant points of each plan.

The lifetime plan:

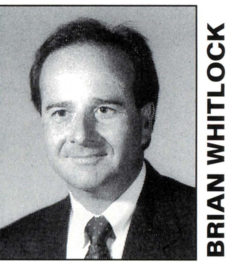
1. Enter into a long-term lease for the real estate between Joe and Success Co. The terms include raising the rent to fair market value and giving Sam an option to buy the property after Joe dies. Then transfer the real estate to a family limited partnership (FLIP).

2. Immediately gift voting and nonvoting control of Success Co. (via a tax-free creation of voting and nonvoting stock) to Sam. Joe is comfortable with this action, and it greatly

IRVING BLACKMAN



Irving Blackman and Brian Whitlock are CPAs with Blackman, Kallick, Bartelstein LLP in Chicago. Also lawyers, they specialize in business succession and wealth transfer. Both are sought-after speakers. Want to consult? Need a second opinion? Contact them at (312)207-1040; fax (312)207-1066. Their special reports are available at a nominal fee.



BRIAN WHITLOCK

reduces the value of Success Co. for estate tax purposes.

3. Every year gift $10,000 of Success Co. stock to Sam and an equal amount to each daughter of limited partnership interests in the FLIP.

4. Transfer the $500,000 life insurance policy from Little Co. to Joe.

5. Next, gift both insurance policies to his daughters. This gets $1.1 million ($500,000 plus $600,000) out of Joe's estate.

6. Elect S Corporation status, so Joe can take tax-free dividends from Success Co. in excess of his salary, which will decrease as he continues to slow down.

The death plan: not much to do. Just a simple will leaving Joe's estate equally to the four kids. But appropriate adjustments must be made for the gifts completed during his life—the stock and the insurance—so that each of the kids is treated equally (to Joe that means "fairly").

What's the final result of Joe's tax plan? It will reduce income and Social Security taxes during every year of Joe's life and probably will reduce an estimated estate tax liability of over $1.5 million to zero. The most important part of this tax story is that the plans outlined above work, no matter how large your estate might be and whether you are single or married.

If your business is not incorporated, read this.

What's the biggest question unincorporated business owners, whether working out of their home or not, ask? "Should I incorporate?"

Although there are many reasons why you should or should not incorporate, the key reason revolves around the tax cost. Here's the general rule: profits mean you should incorporate. For the successful business, the simple fact of incorporation usually means immediate tax savings. For our purposes, let's define a "successful business" as one having a bottom-line profit of $150,000 or less.

How does incorporation save taxes? The answer lies in the corporate tax rates for C corporations, which follow: income under $50,000, rate 15 percent; next $25,000, 24 percent; next $25,000, 34 percent; from $100,000 to $335,000, 39 percent; over $335,000, 34 percent.

The individual tax rates start at 15 percent and go up to almost 40 percent. The best way to understand how the corporate and individual rates can be used in tandem to slash your tax bill is by a concrete example.

Assume Mary Entrepreneur operates a successful home business as a tax-paying corporation, called Things & Stuff Inc. Her husband, Sam, earns in excess of $200,000, which puts Mary and Sam in a solid 40 percent personal tax bracket. Last year Things & Stuff's profit was $60,000. This kicked up only a $10,000 corporate tax ($7,500 on the first $50,000 plus $2,500 on the next $10,000).

If Mary had operated as a sole proprietorship, her $60,000 of Things & Stuff income would have been added to Sam's income. This change would have resulted in $24,000 ($60,000 x 40 percent) in tax. The corporation saved $14,000 ($24,000 minus $10,000). Smart move, Mary!

This article does not attempt to cover every rule, benefit, and problem of incorporating. Suffice it to say that more savings can be yours. ▲

"The most important part of this tax story is that the plans outlined above work, no matter how large your estate might be and whether you are single or married."

Special reports available as companion pieces to this month's "Tax Tips" column can be purchased.

"How to TAKE MONEY OUT of Your Closely Held Corporation"
"Transfer your corporation TO THE NEXT GENERATION... Tax Free"
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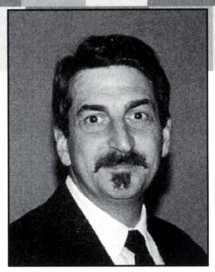


A Play Meter Monthly Exclusive

Son of ArcadePC

One of the really cool things about my job is that I get to play around with all kinds of new equipment; new machines, products, and even entire systems of one sort or another. Sometimes, new developments come right on the heels of other products, superseding them in the blink of an eye. That's what we have this month. It's a look at another Quantum3D product for the ArcadePC. It's a revamp of its Quicksilver ArcadePC system.

As far as I know, the Quicksilver ArcadePC systems are the only PCs designed specifically for coin-op. Like any kit, you can install it into existing or new arcade cabinets. Quicksilver uses a customized, low-profile steel chassis, and specialized components that are designed for the rigors of the arcade environment.

Some of the key "hardening" features that differentiate Quicksilver from conventional PCs include:

☛ A special retention plate that secures the CPU, AGP, PCI, and ISA add-in boards in place to reduce system failures due to "slot creep."

☛ A shock-resistant disc drive assembly that's designed to withstand 100Gs of operating shock. That's 10 times the shock force that conventional disc drives are designed to withstand.

☛ Fans: Regular readers of *Play Meter* know that I'm a big fan of fans. Keeping the inside of your game cool will greatly reduce component and system failures. The Quicksilver has three fans inside to provide optimum cooling.

> "Sometimes, new developments come right on the heels of other products, superseding them in the blink of an eye."

☛ A flanged steel cover secures the chassis to the coin-op cabinet, via either bulkhead or rack-mount attachment.

☛ An Intel Pentium II processor makes processor upgrades literally a snap, because Quicksilver uses Intel's patented Slot-1 architecture.

☛ GCI (the real-time I/O controller by Quantum3D) supports popular arcade style user I/O devices and coin-mechanisms. GCI is electrically and physically compatible with the JAMMA standard (with GCI JAMMA Jongle II adapter), so using Quicksilver in existing arcade cabinets is straightforward. The GCI is software compatible with Microsoft Direct Input, the Open Arcade Device SDK, and Quantum3D's own GCI Control Library—which takes the mystery out of adding coin-op I/O to console and PC games.

☛ Obsidian2 90-4440 AGPTV real-time 3D Accelerator. This is the world's fastest AGP-based real-time 3D accelerator. Based on a unique implementation of 3Dfx Interactive's Voodoo2 chipset, the Obsidian2 90-4440 AGP delivers 90 Megapixels (trilinear) and up to 3.0 million textured triangles per second. Obsidian2's high performance translates into incredible visual realism and amazing frame rates that compel gamers to insert the next coin!

Integrated peripherals

Quicksilver includes Windows 95 from Microsoft; Yamaha 3D Audio; 10/100 Mbps Ethernet; floppy and CD-ROM drives; serial, parallel, and USB ports; PCI/ISA slot; PS2 keyboard; and mouse.

Fixing it

"OK, OK, it's wonderful. Now, how do I fix it when it breaks?"

There are, of course, many ways to approach troubleshooting, but the ArcadePC makes our job much easier by giving us a standard system that utilizes off-the-shelf components. As such, one approach to troubleshooting is to use substitution as your ally. When the system goes down and it's not something simple like a bad power supply, it's pretty easy to swap components between a good PC and your bad one.

Son of ArcadePC: the new, Quicksilver2 ArcadePC from Quantum 3D

I have a couple of suggestions here. One is that you never buy just one of anything. By having a duplicate game (or bill changer or jukebox), you have the ability to interchange components and/or sub-systems, even if it means getting in the car and driving to the nearest location where the duplicate system is in operation. If you are unable to determine the cause of your problem through other troubleshooting methods, you can always fall back on this method. Substitution is more-or-less a "no-brainer" that requires very little electronics training. In most cases, all you need is a screwdriver and a little common sense.

Part of that common sense dictates that you should test your suspected bad components and/or subassemblies in the known-to-be-good unit. The logic behind this is that you may have more than one bad "thingy" in the inoperative system. Putting good stuff in the bad system may not immediately reveal the cause of the problem. On the other hand, if you swap a suspected part into the good system and the symptom of the failure travels with the part, you know for certain what's going on.

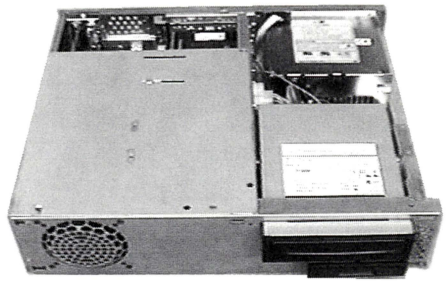
PC diagnostic tools

The ArcadePC opens us up to a wealth of new (to our industry, anyway) troubleshooting and diagnostic tools. These tools allow you to troubleshoot and repair even the deadest of the dead in ways that just aren't possible with the hundreds of different systems we have out on the route.

One such tool is a really great product with a really weird name. The #1-TuffTEST-Pro Professional-Level PC Diagnostics software is a very powerful and reliable diagnostic "tool" for troubleshooting ArcadePCs. If you feel that you need a diagnostic tool that really finds hardware problems, this is a good choice. The company claims that customers include service leaders like AT&T Corp., NCR Corp., Unisys Corp., Xerox Corp., Wang Labs, Eastman Kodak, Honeywell IAC, Novadyne Corp., Fujitsu-ICL, and GTE Corp.

The "stand-alone" advantage

#1-TuffTEST-Pro is a "stand-alone" diagnostic program that has its own proprietary self-booting operating system. Simply turn the target PC off, insert the floppy into Drive A, and turn the ArcadePC on. The program will boot and take complete control of the ArcadePC. This stand-alone advantage allows #1-TuffTEST-Pro to operate directly on the ArcadePC's hardware without interference from the game system's native operating system.



With the cover removed, the "hold down" plate can be seen on the left. This prevents "slot-creep" where the plug-in cards work their way out of their slots.

"OK, OK, it's wonderful. Now, how do I fix it when it breaks?"

Although Windows is the defacto standard for ArcadePC based games, we, as technicians, will find ourselves working on hardware that has no operating system or a corrupted one. In either case, the stand-alone aspect is a top consideration when choosing a diagnostic program.

It uses its own proprietary operating system and is self-loading. This allows it to boot and troubleshoot a malfunctioning PC system regardless of its native operating system (DOS, Windows, Unix, OS/2, etc.). You can even troubleshoot an ArcadePC with no fixed disc drive! This allows you to test a machine in the shop, and swap out the hard drive in the field, knowing that the rest of the machine is working OK.

In contrast, most other utility and diagnostic software products operate as an application program "under" the native operating system (DOS/Windows/etc.). Some even have to be installed on the hard drive before you can use them. While this approach is effective for software and hardware configuration issues, attempting to diagnose hardware malfunctions, through all the various layers of operating system and application software, dramatically affects the quality and reliability of the tests.

Written in assembly language, it's a compact program that executes. The program uses less than 200K of main memory when loaded. In fact, once the main menu appears, the floppy disc is no longer required. It can be removed and used to troubleshoot or burn-in other PCs. It's capable of program relocation during memory testing, so all of main memory can be tested. This is not possible with the much larger DOS/Windows-dependent programs (written in C) that use most (or all) of the main memory when loaded. #1-TuffTEST-Pro utilizes its own custom device drivers, so that diagnostic routines interact directly with the PC's hardware. This ensures precise and reliable test results.

The program bypasses standard ROM BIOS routines when they fail to provide an exact picture of the hardware. For example, most IDE fixed disc drives go into "translation mode" to bypass limitations in earlier hardware/software design. This translation mode masks the true information from the ROM BIOS. For accuracy, the program accesses information directly from the controller and fixed disk drive.

A #1-TuffTEST-Pro Program disc

contains multiple diagnostic programs in compressed format. Each program is custom-written for a specific microprocessor/bus combination. As the program loads, the microprocessor/bus combination of the target system is analyzed, and only the appropriate diagnostic program for that system is expanded and loaded into main memory.

Over 200 of the most rigorous tests and functions are then available for testing Main Memory, Extended Memory, Expanded Memory, Fixed Disc Drives, Diskette Drives, Video Displays and Adapters, Serial and Parallel Interfaces, and Keyboards. Extensive error code information is generated and logged. The Error Log can be viewed or printed.

In addition to troubleshooting a malfunctioning PC, #1-TuffTEST-Pro can be used to certify a repaired ArcadePC; burn-in a new ArcadePC; edit CMOS; and edit the bad track table, low-level format (conditionally or unconditionally) IDE, ST506/412, and supported ESDI host adapters.

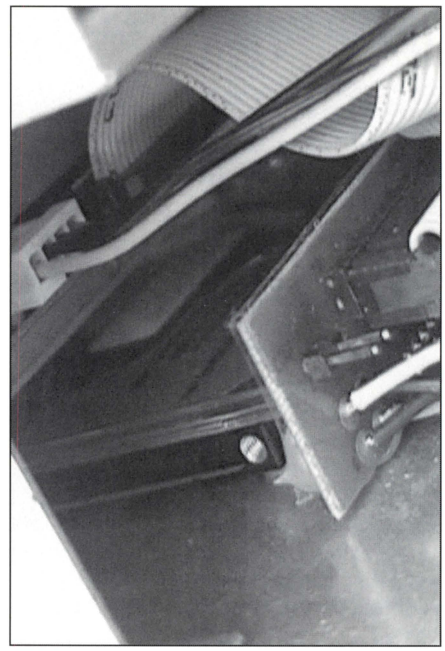
Tests and functions

Configuration Function
- Current Configuration
- CPU Speed Test
- MMX Extensions Test
- BIOS Information
- Switch Positions
- System Memory Size
- Extended Memory Size
- Expanded Memory Size
- CMOS Configuration
- Edit CMOS settings

Certification Tests (Quick System Check)
- Abbreviated System Test
- Extensive System Test
- System Board Test
- Math Coprocessor Test
- Main Memory Test
- Extended Memory Test
- Expanded Memory Test
- Diskette Drives Test
- Fixed Disc Drives Test
- Serial Port Input/Output Test

Parallel Port Input/Output Test
- Parallel Port Tests (LPT1, LPT2 & LPT3)
- Interface (Signal Loopback) Test
- Send the ASCII Character Set to a Printer Test
- Echo the Keys Pressed to a Printer Test
- Monitor Handshake and Data Signals while Printing Test
- Monitor Status Signals from a Printer Test
- Data Test
- Control Test
- Interface Status Test

Serial Port Tests (COM 1, COM2,



This board converts the video outputs to NTSC or PAL composite or S-video for ease in connecting to big screen, projection television units all over the world.

COM3, COM4 & up to 64 user-defined port addresses)
- Internal Operations Test
- External Operations Test
- Transmitter Test
- Receiver Test
- Data Test
- External/Internal Control Line Tests

Diskette Drive Tests (A & B)
- Rotational Timing Test
- Seek/Read Test
- Write-Protect Verification Test
- Read Only Test
- Format Test
- Write/Read/Verify Test
- Select Testing Range Function

Fixed Disc Tests
- Controller Test
- Seek (Hysteresis) Test
- Surface Analysis (Read and Verify ECC/CRC) Test
- Find Optimum Interleave Test
- Low-Level Format - Conditional (Preserve Bad Tracks)
- Low-Level Format - Unconditional
- Media Analysis (Write/Read/Verify) Test
- Find Previously Marked Bad Tracks Function
- Edit and/or Mark Bad Tracks Function
- Reassign Blocks Function
- Select Testing Range Function
- Park the Disk Heads Function

Main Memory Tests
- Abbreviated Memory Test
- Extensive Memory Test
- All zeroes Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- All ones Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Checkerboard Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Address Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Marching Ones Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Walking Ones Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Select Memory Testing Range Function

Note: when any of the Main Memory Tests are run, the program can be relocated on each pass (from the lower portion of main memory to the upper portion of main memory and then back again). This insures that ALL of main memory is rigorously tested. This unequaled ability to test the lower portion of main memory (that is normally occupied by the operating system and operating system dependent programs) is vitally important because this is the most used portion of memory and, therefore, the most likely area to fail.

Extended Memory Tests - Up to 4

Gigabytes
- Abbreviated Memory Test
- Extensive Memory Test
- All zeroes Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- All ones Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Checkerboard Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Address Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Marching Ones Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Walking Ones Test (includes Parity Module Test)
- Select Memory Testing Range Function

Keyboard Tests
- PC-Style Keyboard Test (10 Function Keys)
- Enhanced Keyboard Test (12 Function Keys)
- AT-Style Keyboard (10 Function Keys)
- 102-Key Enhanced Keyboard (European Distribution)
- NCR PC-8 Keyboard (30 Function Keys)

Video Alignment Aids
- Cross-Hatch Pattern
- Dot Pattern
- Vertical Bars Pattern
- Horizontal Bars Pattern
- Text Color Chart

Video Adapter Tests
- Verify Screen Memory Test

Character Set Test
- Video Attributes Test
- Fill Display Test
- Cursor Addressing Test
- Video Memory Test
- Hi-Res Color Test
- Text Resolution Test

Error Log Function
- Display Error Log
- Print Error Log
- Clear Error Log

The program supports computers that conform to the ArcadePC standard and use Intel Pentium II +MMX, Pentium Pro +MMX, Pentium +MMX, and compatible AMD and Cyrix processors with Industry Standard Architecture (ISA), Enhanced Industry Standard Architecture (EISA), Micro Channel Architecture (MCA), VESA Local Bus (VLB), and Component Inter-connect (PCI) bus configurations.

What doesn't #1-TuffTEST Pro do?

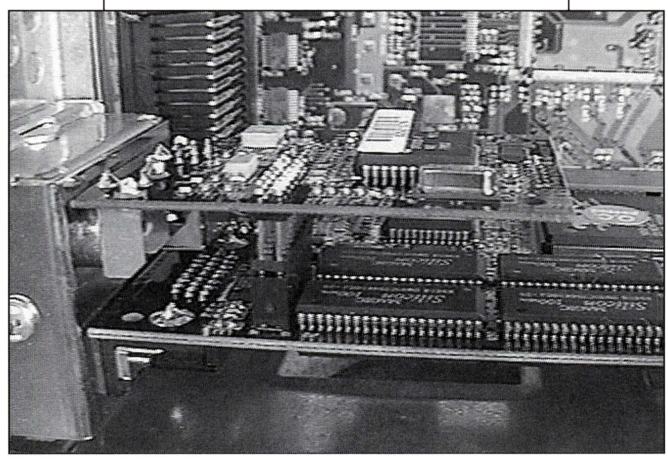
Since the PC's native operating system is not available to #1-TuffTEST-Pro, it cannot use the operating system's functions or interact with the various devices that, due to their proprietary design, are not supported by the PC's BIOS. Examples include pointing devices, CD-ROM drives, sound cards, network cards, etc. These devices require the availability of their own special native operating system-based software drivers, and only a utility that runs under the target system's native operating system can see and interact with these drivers.

For diagnostic tests on these devices, use #1-TuffTEST-Pro in conjunction with operating system dependent products such as Norton Utilities, DOS's MSD, CheckIt, QA-Plus, PC Doctor, etc.

The program has a user-friendly, menu-driven structure. Service personnel, regardless of their experience level, can quickly zero in on the problem and repair or replace only the defective system component. This, of course, is the flip side to the swapping method I mentioned earlier. The program comes with free, unlimited, lifetime technical support during normal business hours via e-mail, phone, fax, or mail.

Here's more good news. It's cheap! #1-TuffTEST-Pro costs only $29.95 to download! Heck, it's practically worth that just for the pattern generator feature alone! The optional set of parallel port and serial port signal loopback TEST Plugs (one 25-pin parallel, one 9-pin serial, and one 25-pin serial) are an additional $19.95 (postage paid) in the USA or $24.95 (postage paid) outside the USA. You do not, however, have to buy the TEST Plugs because complete pinouts are provided in the User Handbook so, if you prefer to, you can make them yourself.

> "Here's more good news. It's cheap!"



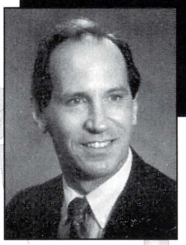
The "secret" to the 100G, shock resistant hard drive is revealed in this "under-cover" photograph. Instead of a normal hard drive, the Quicksilver ArcadePC uses a shock-proof drive that is normally found in laptop computers.

For more information, contact #1-PC Diagnostics Co., 130 Alto Street, San Rafael, CA 94901; (415) 456-2200; fax (415) 456-2244; e-mail (1ttpsales@tufftest.com); Web site (http://www.tufftest.com).

For more information on Quantum3D, e-mail (info@quantum3d.com); Web site (http://www.quantum3d.com). ▲

You can contact me in any number of different ways. 1944 Falmouth Dr., El Cajon, CA 92020-2827; (619)593-6131; fax (619)593-6132; e-mail (randy@randyfromm.com); Web site (http://randyfromm.com), ICQ #10591073; and Video conference via CUseeme at IP 24.4.66.122. See you at the Arcade School!

REDEMPTION & THE LAW



TOM FRICKE

The showdown in TEXAS

Soon after the first of the year, the Texas Legislature will be back in session. It is likely to act to resolve a controversy raging in that state over how the law defines amusement redemption. Its disposition on the controversy will be of significance far beyond the state's borders.

Texas was one of the first states to adopt the amusement purpose, limited-prize exception to the gambling crimes laws. The exception was permissive. It was probably intended to be so. It also created a situation where the government can't make a case of criminal gambling without overcoming the defense provided by the exception. To overcome the defense, the government would have to prove how much value was awarded as the result of play of any particular game. This is a daunting burden, at least the way the law is written now.

Apparently, the defense provided by the exception law created a situation where nobody—law enforcement and the operator included—knew what you were allowed to do and what was prohibited. With law enforcement apparently stymied, all manner of unexpected results occurred. Law-abiding operators asked their county attorneys, "Can I do this?" When advised that they could, they opened video arcades filled with 8-liners. The people came in great numbers. Grownups and retirees playing 8-liner video games in storefront arcades with names like Los-A-Vegas and Slots-A-Fun. Not surprisingly, more than just a few people were offended. One of these was the governor of Texas.

The law placed a great deal of responsibility in the hands of the operator. To be on the right side of the law, the operator could award no prize for a single play with a wholesale value greater than $5. Here is exactly what the law says:

"Gambling device means any electronic, electromechanical, or mechanical contrivance not excluded under Paragraph (B) that for a consideration affords the player an opportunity to obtain anything of value, the award of which is determined solely or partially by chance, even though accompanied by some skill, whether or not the prize is automatically paid by the contrivance. The term: (B) Does not include any electronic, electromechanical or mechanical contrivance designed, made, and adapted solely for bona fide amusement purposes if the contrivance rewards the player exclusively with non-cash merchandise prizes, toys, or novelties, or a representation of value redeemable for those items, that have a wholesale value available from a single play of the game or device of not more than 10 times the amount charged to play the game or device once or $5, whichever is less."

Can you see the problems with this law? Here are a few.

☛ What is a game made solely for amusement? How much chance can be involved in the operation of such a game? Can a game made solely for amusement have a preset retention ratio?

☛ What is a single play of such a game? In an 8-liner, if you play one point on one line on a roll, is that one game? On another roll if you play eight points on eight lines, is that one game or eight games? If you have a double-up feature that follows the roll, where you can use the points awarded on the original roll, is that the same game or a separate game?

☛ What prizes can be awarded over a series of plays? If a player loses a game, can he nevertheless lawfully receive a merchandise award for that play, based on a score carried over from an earlier play?

☛ Can a "bona fide amusement game" award both merchandise and replay credits and still reward the player "exclusively" with merchandise?

☛ Who has to prove what prizes were awarded in a situation where a forfeiture or gambling device prosecution is before the court?

☛ Is a gift certificate lawful to use as a prize?

Criminal laws must be clear and simple to understand. There is good reason for this. A law like this one carries disastrous consequences for violators. Some Texas gambling crimes may be misdemeanors, but a pattern of committing such crimes, with a few people involved, is a state jail felony and also exposes the violator to forfeiting, both the devices used (with the cash in them) and also the entire business of operating them. This can be the entire venue in which the offending devices are operated.

Moreover, operating a business that violates state gambling laws is a federal felony, which carries even more time in jail as a maximum penalty. So you can't afford to be wrong. This means, in effect, that as a matter of public policy the State of Texas can't afford to have a criminal law that is as unclear as this one.

The law's lack of clarity has apparently resulted in a pattern of expansion and reaction. We are now in the reaction phase. On Sept. 11, according to the Associated Press, Stewart Brown, a representative of Texas governor George Bush, stated when testifying at a hearing of the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, that over a thousand 8-liners had been seized during the previous nine months. In addition to these confiscations, some County Attorneys have minimized the need of court action by sending warnings.

According to the *Austin American-Statesman*, Nov. 3, 1998, the policy of warning venues about 8-liners has been so successful that in Travis, Hayes, and Williamson counties, there was "only" one prosecution for criminal gambling all year long. As reported in the *Austin American-Statesman,* in Williamson county, County Attorney Eugene Taylor stated:

"We ended up trying to contact as many merchants as we could to warn them that if we found the machines we would end up taking them in. ...All the merchants that I know of have either gotten rid of them or unplugged them. The main thing is that 8-liners are by definition an illegal gambling device as they are operating basically on chance as opposed to any kind of skill."

Likewise but much more briefly from Mack Martinez, Assistant County Attorney, Travis county: "We sent out

letters and people have taken the machines down."

The operating community through its association, the Amusement and Music Operators of Texas (AMOT) has resorted to the courts for a clarification of the law and the protection of restraining orders and injunctions until the law could be clarified. So far, the courts have been basically no help in telling the parties what the law means. A few temporary injunctions have been issued at the trial level, only to be overturned on appeal.

For example, the operator of an 8-liner arcade in Amarillo sought the protection of the courts on May 22 of this year in response to warnings that the 8-liners were unlawful gambling devices. At a hearing on June 8, the trial court granted a temporary injunction. However, on Nov. 4, the Texas Court of Appeals dissolved the injunction. It seems that in Texas the court has no jurisdiction to say what a criminal law means, unless the issue is presented in court in the form of a prosecution.

Accordingly, in Texas the operator has a difficult choice. If he disagrees with law enforcement about the meaning of the law, he can concede the matter and stop operating the "offending" equipment or allow himself to be prosecuted and hope that his interpretation of the statute—quoted above—will prevail in court. That's a pretty difficult choice to make, when, as is now the case, the courts haven't spoken concerning what the law means. The only exception to this principle is if the law is unconstitutional on it's face, and it isn't the operator who will argue in court that the exception law fits that description.

There have been a few events recently that will cause some to be hopeful that the courts will fix the problems with this law by finally telling us what it means. On Nov. 2, in a rural county northwest of Austin, a jury took just five minutes of deliberation to acquit a man charged with multiple counts of misdemeanor gambling arising out of his operation of an 8-liner arcade. The jury was so outraged that the man had been prosecuted that after delivering their verdict, they held a press conference on the courthouse steps. With the jury foreman speaking for them, they publicly scolded the state for having brought the prosecution in the first place.

Encouraging? Anecdotally, yes. Justice was clearly served in that case because the operator had consulted with his County Attorney and other officials, as to whether his 8-liners could be operated lawfully. He did not operate them until being informed that such operation was lawful. It so happens that the state police strongly disagreed with the County Attorney. Does this case establish that 8-liners are lawful in Texas or that a Texas jury will not convict somebody charged with operating an 8-liner? I don't think so. It establishes no more than the proposition that the mistake of law defense may be alive and well in Texas.

What then is the Legislature likely to do about the controversy three months from now? You might recall that as reported previously in this column, in 1997 a bill in the Texas Legislature to repeal the limited-prize exception upon which the operation of 8-liners in Texas depends, was almost passed. It took a midnight filibuster to prevent its passage. Since then, it seems that no one who operates an 8-liner in Texas has had a night's sleep. If there hasn't been a meaningful decision from any Texas court, at least there has been a great deal of publicity about the Bush Administration's efforts to prosecute 8-liner operators under the existing law.

Governor Bush also formed a Blue Ribbon Task Force to study the problems he saw with interpreting and enforcing the state's criminal prohibition of gambling devices. The Task Force has apparently completed its work and submitted a report to Governor Bush. We probably won't get to see it until January, when a bill to repeal the exception law is introduced. However, we don't need to see the report. We can pretty well guess that it is going to slam 8-liners and the people who operate them. Moreover, we can make an educated guess as to the specific thrust of the Blue Ribbon Task Force report by looking at similar reports produced by similar executive branch working groups, under similar circumstances in other states in the recent past.

One such report is that of the State of New Jersey Commission of Investigation, submitted in September 1991 to Governor James Florio and each member of the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly. The report was prepared in response to various proposals to open up New Jersey to VLT (video lottery terminal) gaming, run by operators or a monopolistic state lottery system. The report made several statements and recommendations that I expect to see repeated in the Texas Blue Ribbon Task Force report.

If the New Jersey report is, in fact, any gauge of what we might expect, then don't expect that of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force to present the operator's side of the controversy. After all, we don't have the right to expect balance from the arguments that our opponents make against us in courts of law, courts of public opinion, or in the legislature. In each of these three forums, it's up to the decision maker to determine what's fair, after considering all arguments presented by the advocates of the opposing sides. Expect this in the Blue Ribbon Task Force report.

A look at the New Jersey report shows a specific recommendation that is ostensibly neutral, but which is preceded by discussion of everything that's wrong with allowing people to play for prizes. Here are some examples.

"Today ... we find the descendants of the one-armed bandit proliferating not only in this state but in the entire Nation. These electronic machines, like their mechanical predecessors, are capable of generating millions of dollars of illegal profits for organized criminal groups and enterprises. ...organized crime families have rediscovered the lucrative slot machine market ...unlike the earlier mechanical devices, however, the new ... electronic slot machines are equipped with sophisticated computer software. This software allows the operators, manufacturers, and distributors of the machines to inhibit law enforcement detection by masking their true nature as illegal gambling devices. The citizens and lawmakers of New Jersey are familiar with gambling. Our state has more forms of legalized gambling than any other state in the Nation. Over the years, a great deal of attention has been focused on the subject. Now there is something new on the horizon, gambling of a different kind. Along with fax machines, automatic teller machines, VCRs, and personal computers, technology has brought us a new and more convenient way to gamble ... video machines. Devices formally thought to house only innocent Pac-Men and Super Mario brothers now can be made to serve a much more sinister purpose. As difficult as it may be to believe, our testimony will show that fortunes can be won or lost in increments of 25 cents. The evidence will demonstrate also the harm done to the young people in our state ... at a time in their lives when they ought to be spending more time in libraries than in video arcades."

In addition to this general characteri-

zation, the New Jersey report urges that the state's policy be one of economy of law enforcement resources:

"Among officials involved in law enforcement, there is a general agreement that a disproportionate amount of time, manpower, and other resources is devoted to enforcement of anti-gambling laws, both in relation to actual benefits achieved and in relation to the amount of such resources diverted from more urgent needs of public order and safety."

In the Texas Blue Ribbon Task Force report, expect to see vignettes and antidotes about the social harm claimed to be caused by 8-liners. Here is an example of such a claim, made in the New Jersey report, by means of a transcription of an operator's testimony:

"One day I was in one of my locations collecting money and a guy walks in to buy a pack of cigarettes and he noticed that the machines were mobbed with people. He asked me what it was. I said it's a keno machine and you put a quarter in it and you might win a dollar or two. So he put a couple of quarters in and the first day I think he won about $100. Then he was back every single day after work and after about two or three weeks he was there every day, nine in the morning. Suddenly his Jaguar disappeared and he lost his job. His wife came looking for him and it was a mess. His wife would come down every day trying to get him out of there because you know he was blowing all his money. And what happened is she started playing the machine. Then they just disappeared off the face of the earth. I guess they didn't have any money left. I didn't see them anymore."

Like I said, don't expect fairness. The fairness will come when the Legislature acts after all sides of the story have been presented. The New Jersey report concludes by listing the options available to the Legislature: increased law enforcement, banning video games, government inspection and regulation, and legalization of video gambling. When it comes to fairness, I hope that the words of the New Jersey report about banning video games and about regulation find an echo in the Blue Ribbon Task Force report. On banning video games, the report concluded:

" Enactment of laws to impose a complete ban on any electronic device which can be easily be converted to illegal use would eliminate the present law enforcement dilemma of distinguishing the 'good' machines from the 'bad.' Any such machine would be subject to seizure on sight as per se contraband, without the need for the police to undertake lengthy surveillance to witness its being used for illegal purposes. This simplest-to-impose and easiest-to-carry-out solution has one major drawback. It would outlaw not only unlawfully used machines, it would also ban those that are used innocently, including those played for inexpensive prizes along the boardwalks and at amusement parks, as well as those which exist—ostensively for pier entertainment—throughout the state."

I hope that the New Jersey report's conclusions about regulation are echoed in the Texas Blue Ribbon Task Force report:

"The technology already exists to inspect video devices to insure that they will play legally permitted games only and to determine easily if they have been tampered with."

I also hope that the Legislature as a body proceeds fairly, by identifying any abuses that may be proved as having occurred and re-crafting the exception law to continue the decriminalization of low-stakes video amusement merchandise redemption games, while making it more efficient for the state to prosecute violators. However, to achieve such a result, the industry apparently has its work cut out. And such a result is, as I see it, far from assured. After the midnight filibuster that ended the efforts in 1997 to repeal the Texas merchandise redemption exception, I summed up in this column my assessment of what might lie ahead for the industry in Texas:

"The Texas Legislature will not convene for a regular session until early 1999. What will happen then and between now and then? AMOT and its allies have struggled tirelessly to preserve the existing law. Now, no one will gainsay that it is imperative that this law be complied with. Finespun theories aside, the law doesn't have to make sense. It simply has to be what the people want. The current law entrusts the operator with the responsibility of observing a prize limitation. If the prize limitation should be flaunted, then in two years it may be that the popular will is to abolish the amusement game exception, not to preserve it. It may simply be a case of 'abuse it and you'll lose it.'"

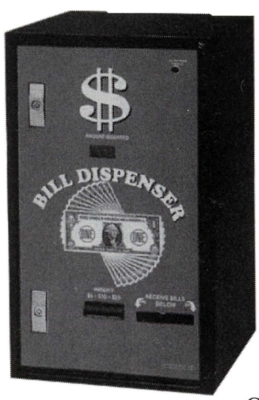
Now, nobody can fault a person for "abusing" a law, when that law isn't clear. However, we are about to see whether the people want to fix that law or scrap it. ▲

Tom Fricke is a St. Louis-based attorney who specializes in legal issues relating to the amusement game business. He serves as chairman of the IAFEC government relations committee. He can be reached at (314)361-6672.

TRADE ACCESSORIES

Themed environments

Quadriga Productions Inc. provides themed facades, themed family fun center build-outs, themed characters, and themed restaurant and retail store build-outs. The company works with customers to custom design projects. Parts are fabricated in lightweight, easy to install polystyrene and encapsulated in durable polyurethane. All projects have long life spans, are weather resistant, and require little maintenance. Animation, special effects, and sound effects are also offered. A short list of current and past Quadriga Productions clients includes Universal Studios, Fla.; Treasure Island, Las Vegas; Global Fair, Korea; Disneyland; Disney World; FAO Schwartz; and Ripley's Wonder Works. For more information, contact Quadriga, (407)370-6880; fax (407)370-6733; Web site (www.quadriga-productions.com).

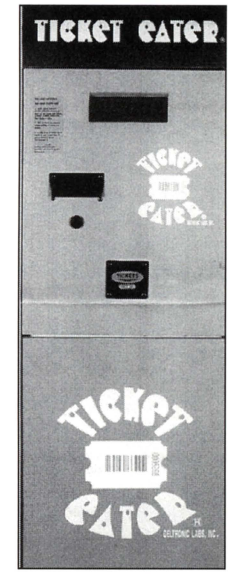


Bill dispenser

American Changer Corp. has made available the AC7000 bill dispenser, which has the following specifications: 500 bill standard capacity; 1,000 or 2,000 bill optional capacity; dispenses $1, $2, or $5 bills; accepts $5, $10, and $20 bills, with the option of $50 and $100 bills; and an optional security alarm. Many token dispensers and bill changers are also available. For more information, contact American Changer Corp., (800) 741-9840; Web site (www.americanchanger.com).

Synth a Beams

Interactive Entertainment Systems offers Synth a Beams, a lighting and sound effects unit which triggers sound effects when the beams of light are interrupted. The unit comes with eight lights generating colored beams. Skip Smith of game rental company Plan-It Interactive said, "The quickest return on any equipment investment we ever made! School dances and graduation nights are hot on it!" Mark Weinstock of DJ entertainment company Party Nation said, "The kids had a lot of fun running through the beams triggering the sounds." For more information, contact Interactive Entertainment Systems, (888) 838-0110; fax (323) 469-9305; Web site (interactiveent.com)



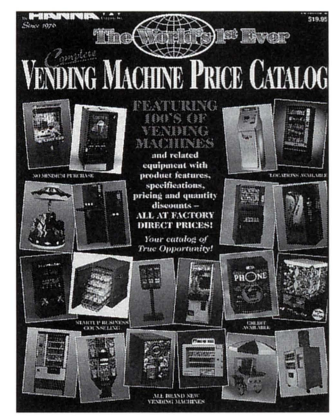
Ticket eater

Deltronic Labs Inc. presents the TT-1000 Ticket Eater, its latest addition to the Ticket Eater series. Fully automated, the stand-alone Ticket Eater counts and destroys tickets and prints a receipt. TT-1000 allows customers to feed their tickets into it and view the display and counting process. Finally, a receipt for redemption is issued to the customer.

Features of the TT-1000 include a high visibility, four-digit, two-inch display of each ticket value and total points counted; the sending of messages "full bin," "print," "paper low," and "error;" standard thermal printer for speed and accurate bar codes; programmed when manufactured to read only your custom bar coded tickets; can be programmed to read up to eight different bar coded tickets; accepts standard redemption tickets; quick release cutter mechanism and internal electronics mounted to a convenient roll-out shelf; and a no-cheating-allowed-feature which subtracts one if the tickets are pulled on. For more information, contact Deltronic Labs, (215)997-8616; fax (215)997-9506.

Vending machine industry price catalog

The Hanna Co. Inc. located in Lenexa, Kan., has published what it calls the world's first wholesale vending machine price catalog, Volume 2. The catalog features a comprehensive array of popular brands and models available in today's market including manual bulk to impulse games, ATMs, manual and electronic countertop snack machines, soda vendors, photo sticker, sports card, fun stickers, combination type snack/soda and full size vending equipment, and more. The catalog also answers numerous frequently asked questions about vending machines and opportunities in the vending industry.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This catalog allows for an insight into vending equipment pricing, operations, maintenance, and purchase. Hanna hopes to simplify the equipment acquisition process, both for user and provider alike and substantially eliminate the vast number of vending scams which are reported to district attorneys every day.

Since 1975, The Hanna Company has been supplying both large and small vending companies, store owners,

manufacturers, distributors, and most other business segments, both in the United States and around the world. Volume 2 of Hanna's factory direct, price catalog, is available in living color.

For more information, contact The Hanna Company Inc., (913)469-8278; fax (913)451-0008; Web site (www.hanna-vending.com/); e-mail (Charles@hanna-vending.com).

Bill changer

The new Rowe model BC-3500 bill changer offers easy access to all components and is available in blue and white or black and white with a token sign. Product features include: accepts $1, $2, $5, $10, and $20 bills; three hoppers; token capability; optional lighted token sign; optional dollar coin and quarter acceptance; heavy duty steel cabinet and three-point locking system; machine controlled by plug in programmable electronic chip; advanced 16-character self diagnostic display; optional security features; and UL approved. For more information, or distributor referral, contact Rowe, (616) 243-3633; fax (616) 243-9414..

Reservations scheduler software

Intercard's reservations scheduler package can be used with or without a card system implementation to assist in the managing of the group and event business within the facility. Designed with the needs of an entertainment facility in mind, this software package will schedule your available resources: hosts, rooms, area, bowling lanes, billiard tables, etc; create as many event offerings as you wish; manage event revenues, including down payments and reservation requirements; create reminder and confirmation letters; and balance the account at the end of the event and create final invoice/receipt. The easy-to-learn calendar format makes booking, changing, or revising event needs quick and simple. Sales personnel can upgrade events from one type to another in just a few keystrokes. Adding items, special notes or requirements is another measure of flexibility built into the software.

Customers can use the package to schedule birthday parties and events; company outings, meetings and team building exercises or training events; group lock-ins; and parties for any special event or occasion. This package is written for Windows 95 or NT operating systems.

The Version 7.0 release provides enhancements to every basic component in the Intercard system. Most added features are the result of customer request and input. A few of the many enhancements in this release include: the teller can be programmed to set a spending limit for a credit card (this is designed to limit the operator's risk from stolen cards, as the credit card clearing houses do not offer protection for fraudulent credit card transactions without the signature of the card holder); time-based play can be configured in minutes (up to 6000 minutes) instead of hours; the mini-till unit now supports a cash drawer as an optional device to make the mini-till a "low end" POS device; and redemption points can be redeemed from the readers without requiring a game coin-up.

For more information, contact Intercard, (314)275-8066.

Redemption items for girls

Oriental Trading is offering a line of redemption items, tailored specifically for girls, entitled "Thank heaven for Little Girls." Items include porcelain dolls, a handbag stationery set, a ballerina jewelry box, jewelry, a plush photo frame, and a tea set. For more information, contact Oriental Trading, (800)228-8884; fax (800)228-1002; Web site (www.oriental.com/redemp).

Lightning detection system

The Todd Harris Co. Inc. and Global Atmospherics Inc. together have introduced its line of lightning detection systems for the amusement, entertainment, and waterpark industries. Each system can be interfaced with existing communications infrastructure or can be installed with visual and audible notification devices. Detection systems can monitor lightning up to hundreds of miles away, differentiate between cloud to ground and ground to cloud lightning, and are independently tested by the FAA and National Weather Service. For more information, contact The Todd Harris Co. Inc., (800)398-5482; fax (732)287-6651. ▲

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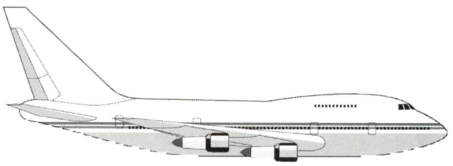

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'99 International CES — **January 7-10**

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Leisure Entertainment Expo — **January 14-16**

Orlando, Fla.
Orange County Convention Center. Call (305)448-7976; fax (305)448-4630.

Nightclub & Bar/Beverage Retailer Convention and Trade Show — **January 18-20**

Las Vegas, Nev.
Sands Expo Center. Call (800)247-3881 or (601)236-5510; fax (601)236-5541; Web sites (www.nightclub.com) or (www.beverage-retailer.com).

Amusement Trades Exhibition International — **January 27-29**

London, England
Earls Court. Call +44 (0)1273 204817; fax +44 (0) 1273 204827; e-mail (atei@fastnet.uk).

AmEx '99 — **March 2-3**

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Doyle Green Isle Hotel. Call +353(0)45-521190; fax +353 (0)45-521198; e-mail (mdassociates@tinet.ie).

Amusement Showcase International — **March 11-13**

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Las Vegas Convention Center. Call (708)333-9292; fax (708)333-4086.
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Game Developers Conference — **March 15-19**

San Jose, Calif.
Call (415)356-3345; fax (415)905-2222; Web site (www.cgdc.com).
PM

North Carolina Amusement Machine Association Convention — **April 8-10**

Charlotte, N.C.
Sheraton Airport Plaza. Call (919)383-0044; fax (919)383-0035.

NAMA Western — **April 15-17**

Anaheim, Calif.
Anaheim Convention Center. Call (312)346-0370; fax (312)704-4140.

Illinois Coin Machine Association Annual Meeting — **May 14-15**

Rockford, Ill.
The Clock Tower. Call (630)369-2406; fax (630)369-2488.

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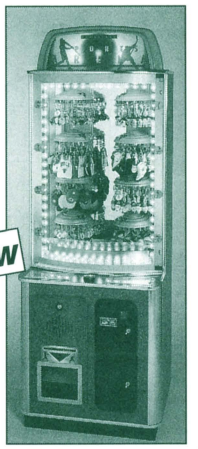

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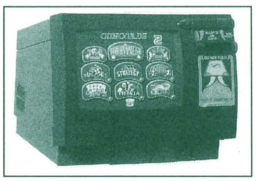

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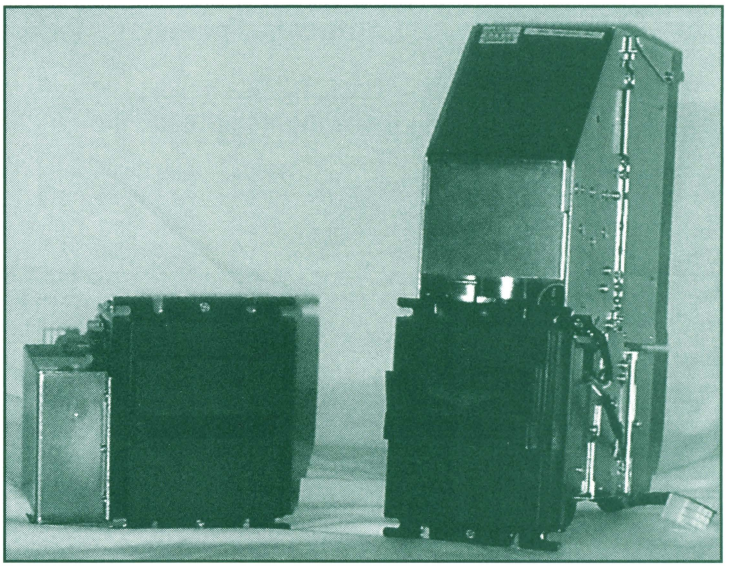

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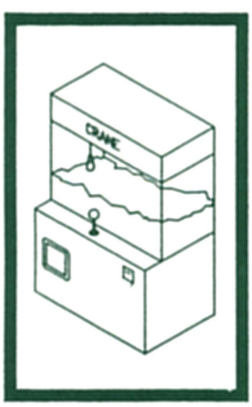

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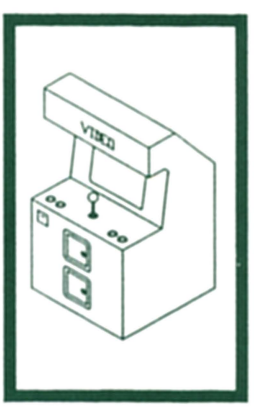

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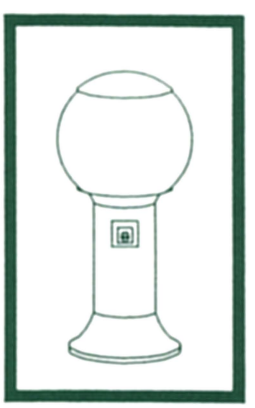

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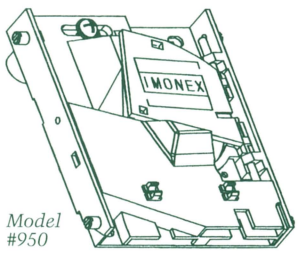

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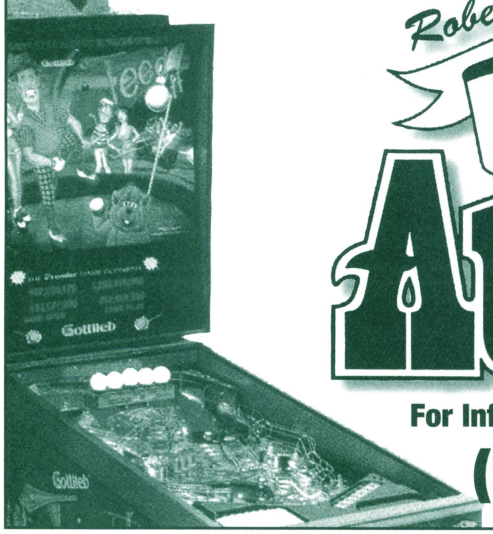

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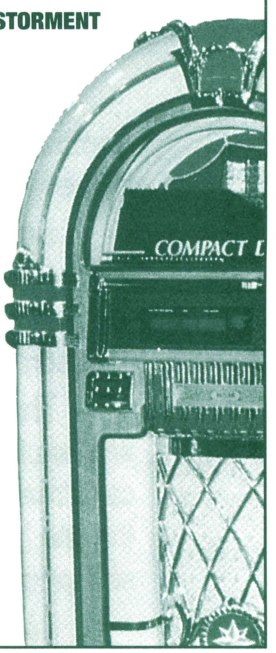

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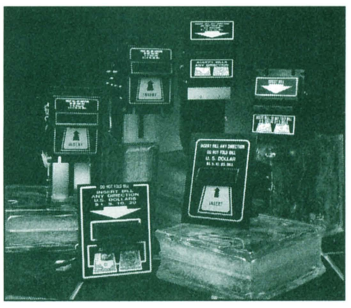

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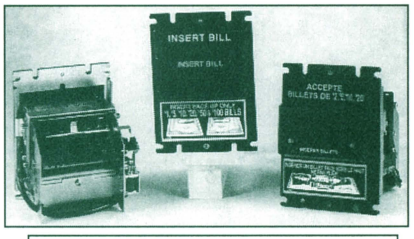

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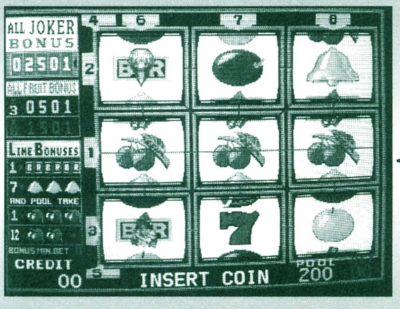

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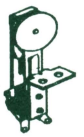

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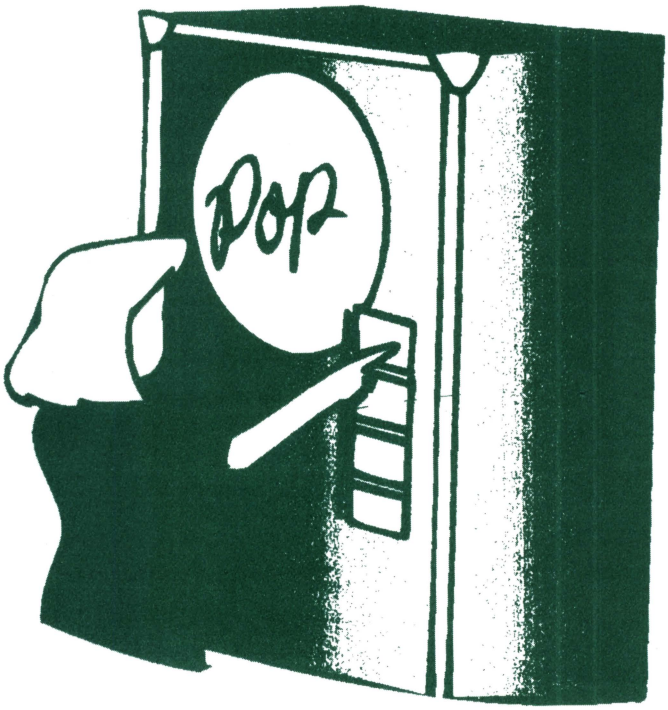

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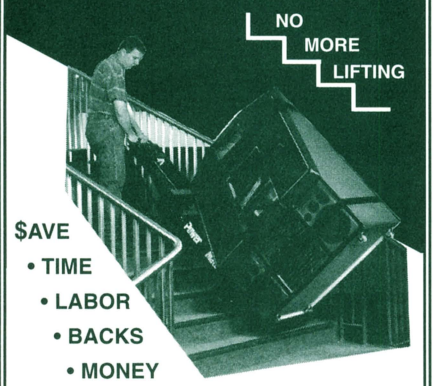

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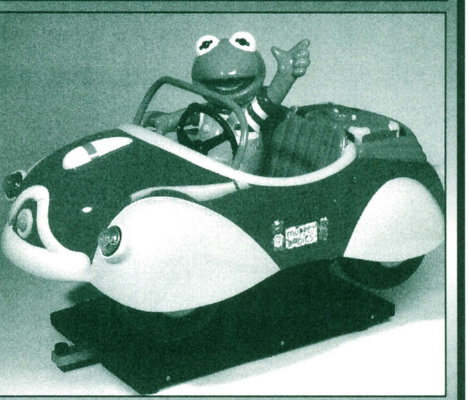

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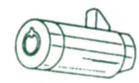

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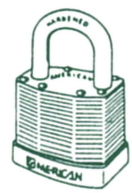

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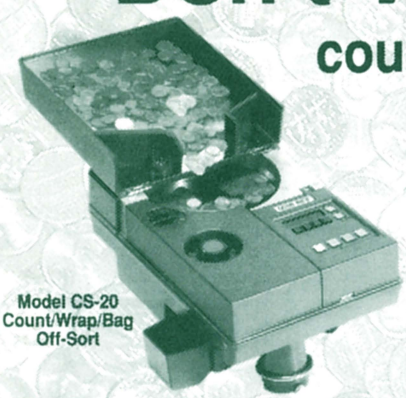

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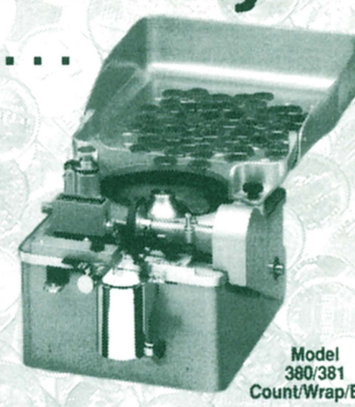

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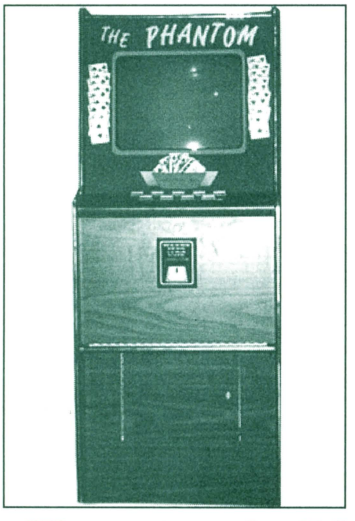

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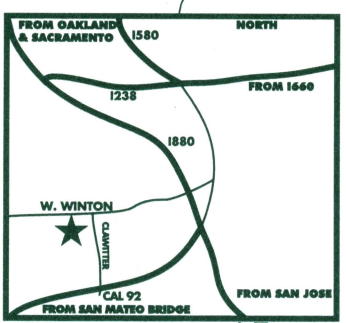

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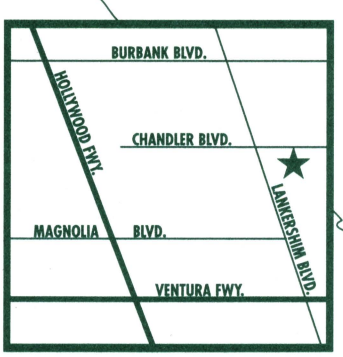

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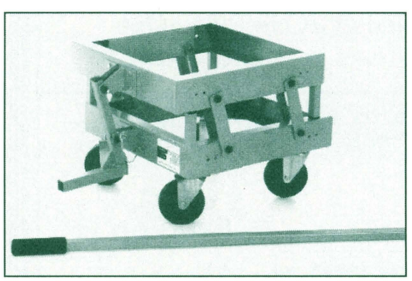

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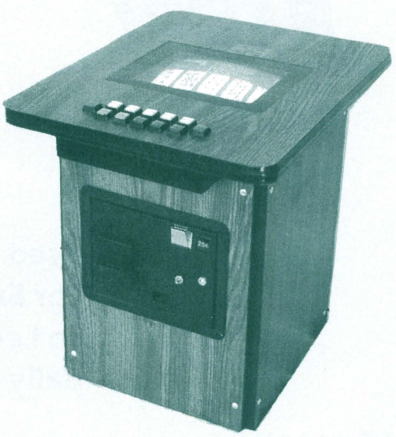

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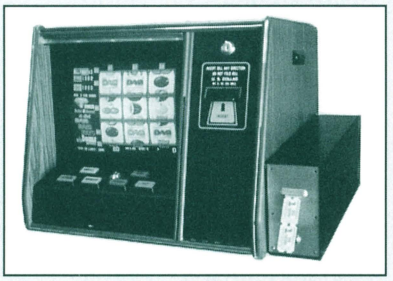

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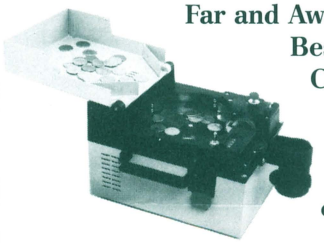

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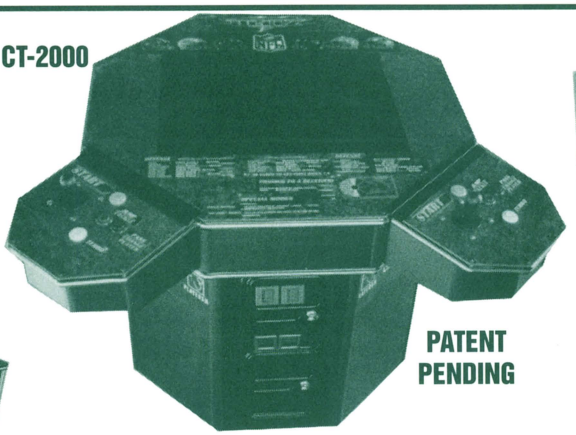

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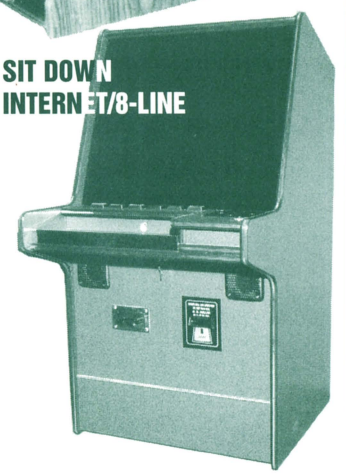

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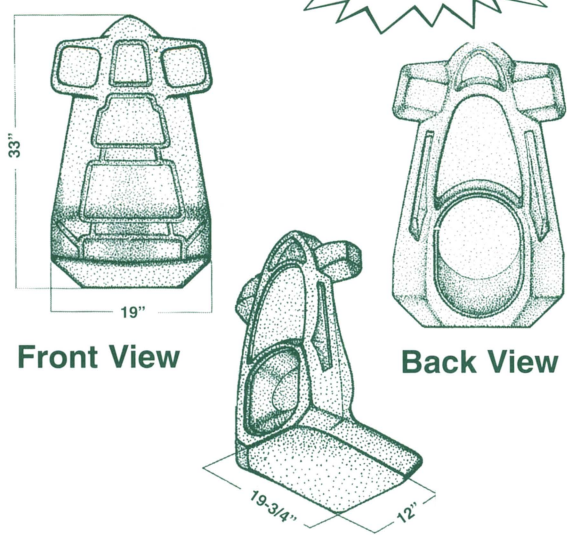

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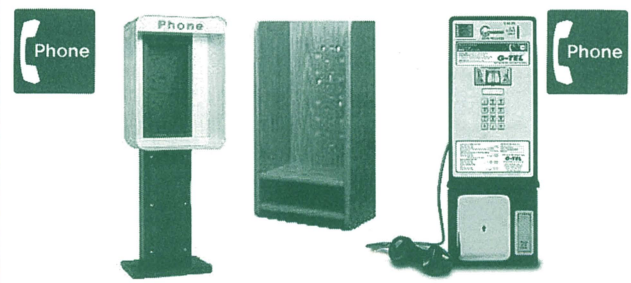

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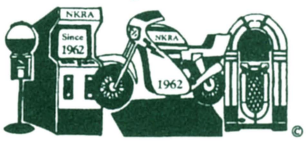

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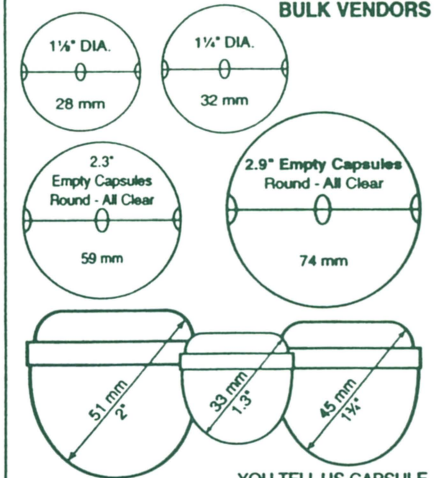

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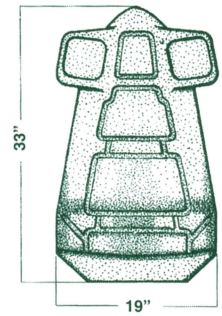

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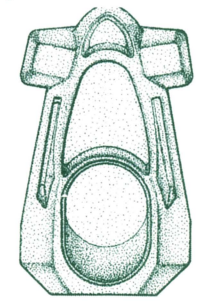

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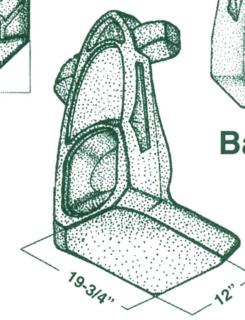

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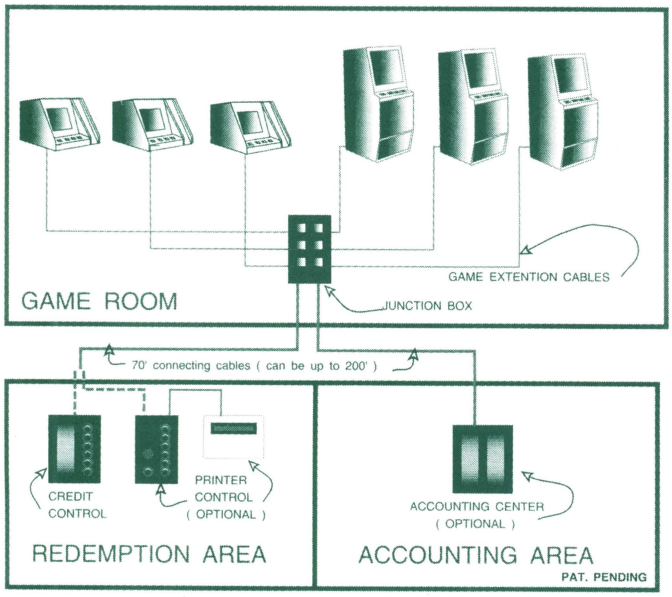

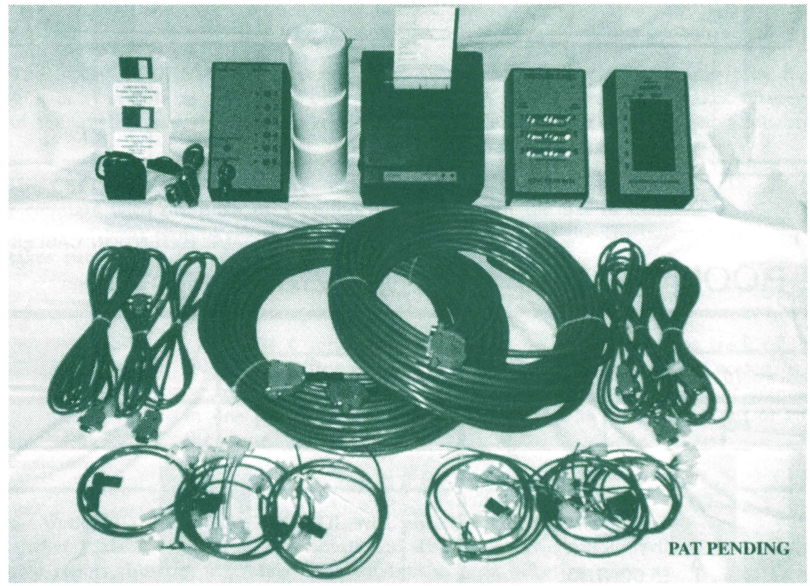

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